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CHESS IMPROVEMENT WITH SUSAN POLGAR

JOHN HILBERT REDISCOVERS GEORGE N. CHENEY  
A 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN CHESS STORY

# AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

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WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET

## BERLIN CANDIDATES

FABIANO CARUANA  
QUALIFIES AS  
WORLD TITLE  
CHALLENGER!  
JACOB AAGAARD

**U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP**  
CALIFORNIA GIRL  
A STAR  
IS BORN  
ANNIE WANG

GIANT KILLER  
DON'T MESS  
AROUND!  
ZVIAD IZORIA

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE  
WHATEVER  
HAPPENED TO  
"THE BIG 3"?  
JOHN BURKE  
MICHAEL ROHDE  
JOHN FEDOROWICZ

**WHO IS  
INTO ROLEX?**  
chess players &  
luxury watches

## PLAY IT SMART

GO FOR THE  
EXCHANGE  
CARO-KANN!  
ROBERT HUNGASKI

THE THREE  
PILLARS  
OF ENDGAME  
TECHNIQUE  
ALEX FISHBEIN

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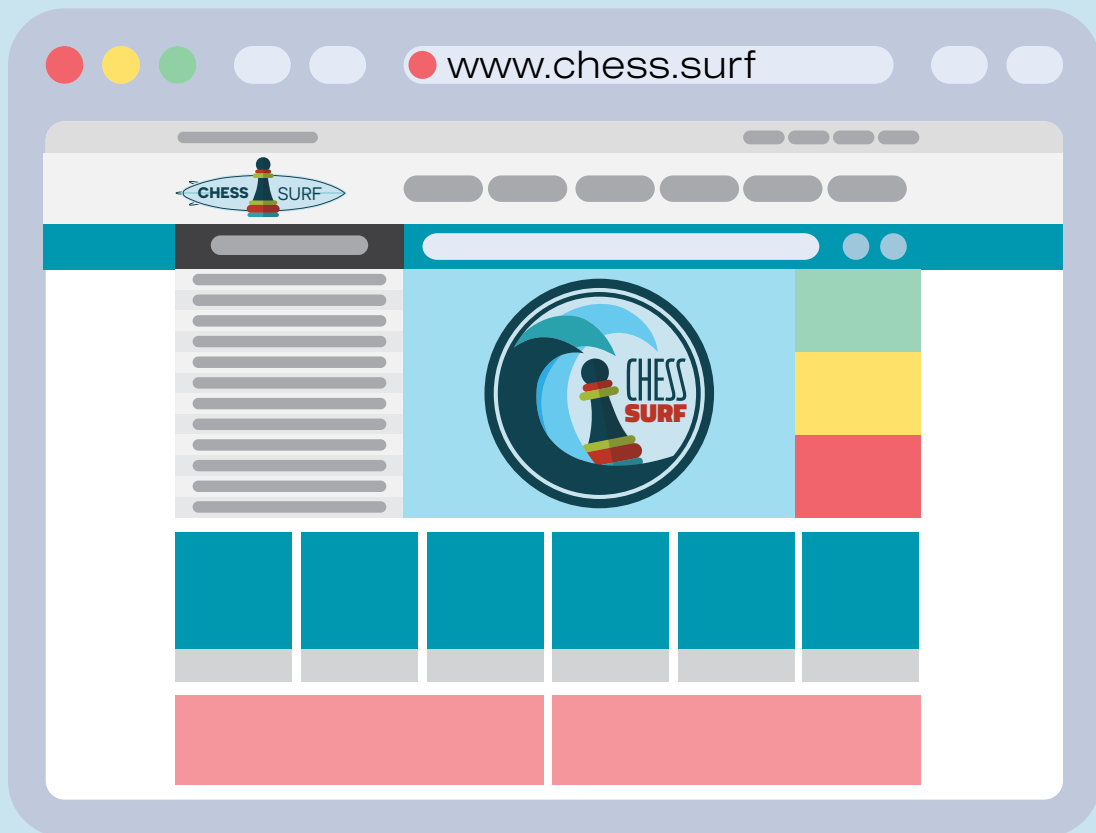
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# Sam Shankland CAPTAIN <sup>IS</sup> AMERICA

INTERVIEW &  
EXCLUSIVE  
ANNOTATIONS

ST. LOUIS: A NEW US CHAMPION • MONTEVIDEO: A NEW ALL-AMERICAN CHAMPION  
WEST-COAST GRANDMASTER'S STEADY BUT IRRESISTIBLE RISE TO THE TOP

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# AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE



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Office  
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Website: **[www.acmchess.com](http://www.acmchess.com)**  
Correspondence: **[office@acmchess.com](mailto:office@acmchess.com)**  
Emails to the editor: **[editor@acmchess.com](mailto:editor@acmchess.com)**

Letters to: American Chess Magazine, 2028 E Ben White Blvd, Ste 240-2969,  
Austin, TX 78741; Or call: 512-910-2107

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GM Hikaru Nakamura



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## UNSTOPPABLE SHANKLAND

With a +7 score, Sam Shankland has won the 167-player All-American Continental Championship in Montevideo, Uruguay. After winning the US Championship, he then capitalized further on his outstanding form by winning the Capablanca Memorial in Havana, Cuba, a clear 1½ points ahead of second placed Alexey Dreev. In both cases he remained undefeated, thereby extending his unbeaten run to 60 consecutive games while increasing his peak rating to 2727 points!

Argentinian Diego Flores finished in clear 2<sup>nd</sup> place, while seven other players, including our contributor Robert Hungaski, had to play a rapid tie-break to decide two more qualifiers for the next World Cup. In the end it was the Peruvian pair, Jorge Cori and Emilio Cordova, who got through.

**Final standings:** 1. Shankland (USA) **9** out from 11, 2. Flores (ARG) **8½**, 3-9. Cori (PER), Cordova (PER), Mareco (ARG), Quispe (PER), Escalante Ramirez (PER), Hungaski (USA), Salinas Herrera (CHI) **8**, etc.

## JU WENJUN IS THE NEW WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPION

27-year old Chinese world title challenger Ju Wenjun triumphed over her compatriot Tan Zhongyi with a final match score of 5½-4½, thereby becoming the new Women's World Champion. Wenjun was the overall winner of the Women's Grand Prix Series in 2015-2016, which earned her the right to challenge the champion Zhongyi. The first five games were played in Shanghai where Wenjun took an early lead of 3½-1½. Then the match moved to Chongqing, where Zhongyi won the first game but failed to save the match after all the remaining games ended in a draw, albeit after some nerve-wracking battles.

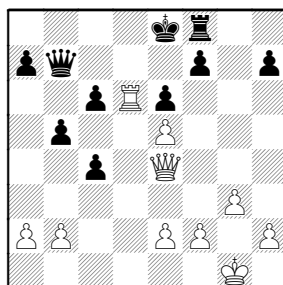


**Ju Wenjun** 2571  
**Tan Zhongyi** 2522

Game 3, Women's  
World Championship 2018

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 dxc4 5.♙g2 ♘c6 6.0-0 ♙b8 7.♘c3 b5 8.♘e5 ♘xe5 9.dxe5 ♘d7 10.♙c2 ♙b7 11.♙xb7 ♙xb7 12.♙d1 ♙e7 13.♙e4 ♙c8 14.♙g4 g5? 15.♙h5 ♘c5 16.♙xg5+- c6 17.♙d4 ♙d7 18.♙xe7 ♘xe7 19.♙h4+ ♘e8 20.♙ad1 ♙d8 21.♙f4 ♙xd4

22.♙xd4 ♙b6 23.♙d6 ♙f8  
24.♘e4 ♘xe4 25.♙xe4 ♙b7



26.♙xc6 ♘d7 27.♙d4+ 1-0

## CARUANA AHEAD OF CARLSEN IN NORWAY

With only one game in progress, it looked like the Altibox Norway Chess tournament in Stavanger would end with the feast of a 5-player blitz playoff to decide the winner. But Fabiano Caruana spoiled the party! After the first time control Wesley So overlooked a forced perpetual check, thereby enabling Fabiano to cruise to outright victory. After losing in round 1 to Magnus Carlsen (see page 68), Ding Liren had a bicycle accident and had to withdraw from further play. It then seemed as though Caruana's chances of winning the tournament had dropped considerably, since only eight instead of nine rounds remained to be played. Nevertheless, with victories over Karjakin and Anand, together with a great finish against So, the American grandmaster managed to achieve yet another tremendous success.

## US GOLDEN TEAM: IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT!

The US Teams have been announced for the upcoming Chess Olympiad, scheduled to take place in Batumi, Georgia, from September 23 to October 7, 2018. The men will be represented by the very same team members who won Olympic gold in Baku two years ago – Fabiano Caruana, Wesley So, Hikaru Nakamura, Sam Shankland and Ray Robson, assisted by team coach Alex Lenderman and led by captain John Donaldson.

As for the women's team, there will be no Nazi Paikidze nor Annie Wang! The team will consist of Irina Krush, Anna Zatonskih, Tatev Abrahamyan, Jennifer Yu and Sabina Foisor, coached by Robert Hess and captained by Melikset Khachiyan.





# LETTER from the EDITOR

## SITTIN' ON THE DOCK OF THE BAY

was sitting at a stone chess table, the kind you see in parks, minding my own business, when a guy suddenly shows up with a chess clock. He clearly wants to sit down opposite me but I couldn't help notice a hint of reluctance on his face. Do I want to play chess at all, he is probably asking himself. "Sure!" – I cut a long story short with a one word answer delivered with such conviction as if I had been waiting for this to happen all day long. However, my calm and confident demeanor suddenly came to an abrupt end as I sensed that all eyes in the street were instantly re-focused on our board. Well, it doesn't happen too often that you are approached to play a game of chess by one of the world's top ten grandmasters. Guess what, the guy was Hikaru Nakamura!

I lost all four games, I would say rather easily. True, I somehow felt obliged to boost Naka's confidence after his not-so-great US Championship which had just ended the same day. Nevertheless I wouldn't go so far as to claim that my lack of fighting spirit was what decided the final outcome. Anyway I then got some small satisfaction by criticizing him for not being more successful recently – we want him on the cover page of American Chess Magazine, right? I was glad when he promised he would do his best to get over that problem, so it seemed that even a great player like Hikaru appreciates such recognition.

Anywhere else you wouldn't get an opportunity like this. But here, on a quiet sunny afternoon in a lazy street just a few blocks away from the historic Route 66, there is always a chance – so grab it while you can, like I did. And it is no coincidence. This is the same neighborhood where you will also find the St. Louis Chess Club and there are many reasons why it should be the destination of choice for your next chess pilgrimage.

I met so many bright people here and played endless blitz games. This is the vibrant West End of St. Louis and just around a nearby corner there are many popular cafes and restaurants. After sunset people start to circulate but even then the chess players maintain their status as worthy members of society. You see, at ZIP 63108 it's all about chess! The giant king chess piece across the street, the monumental club house, the Hall of Fame museum, the restaurant that offers special rates to chess visitors... You might even assume the role of a tourist guide yourself to unsuspecting people. After all, you are fully qualified – you are an expert on chess! So don't tempt me with the water amusement parks with their rollercoaster rides, I have already found my luna park and I am the undisputed authority on its main attractions!

As the night draws on, it's party time – with celebrities. You might need to know someone to gain admittance but once you understand the way things are done, then it's quite easy to make yourself at home. The fridge is always full of cold drinks. The pizzas will arrive sooner or later. No one asks you how you got to be here. There is no bouncer on the door anyway. In fact, after a few days mingling with the regulars, I even took it upon myself to allow in chess friends, although that's strictly confidential! But it's great fun to be inside these places assigned to the championship participants. Here I was able to see for myself Caruana's skill at bughouse chess, the length of time Seirawan can hold the attention of a listening audience, and Nakamura's fierce determination to win every single blitz game. These people are really real and hopefully the present edition of our magazine will convey their wonderful chess spirit reaching out from the US Mid-West to the wider world.

**Josip Asik, Editor-in-Chief**

FM Josip Asik vs.  
GM Hikaru Nakamura,  
St. Louis 2018.  
*Photo by Eric Rosen.*





AFTER WINNING THE US CHAMPIONSHIP, SAM SHANKLAND REFLECTS ON THE BIGGEST SUCCESS OF HIS CAREER SO FAR

# “MAYBE I’M BEING ASSISTED BY FISCHER’S GHOST!”

by **JOSIP ASIK** ||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||

■ **How and for how long did you prepare for the Championship? On what areas did you mostly focus?**

My preparation was not wildly different from most other events. I spent much more time working for Black because I wanted to never be worse out of the opening, and I thought I would have a hard time getting much with White anyway. For the most part, it worked – in my six games with Black, I comfortably equalized in five of them. With White I was a little happier in general to just get a position and play, though obviously fighting for an advantage more often would have been nice. I didn’t spend that much time preparing since I didn’t have that much time! I flew to Saint Louis just five days after returning from China.

■ **What was the moment you realized that the path to the title was open for you?**

I always believed I had a chance, even if a very small one, and that belief grew stronger and stronger every round from the third one onward. It was only after round nine that I thought it became a serious possibility, as I was leading the field and had the two tail-enders left.

■ **Was there any moment of temporary weakness that you had to overcome during this tense event?**

I managed to hang a pawn twice to Akobian, and was lucky that he didn’t take either one! Fortunately



At the opening ceremony I discussed with Sam the article from ACM #06, where Karsten Mueller showcased his endgame skills. “I don’t know about that”, Sam was arguing, “I wish I was so good in endings”. But he was eager to read the column. Later, when not playing, he was nowhere to be seen. Sam adopted the strategy of “work hard in the room” with his mysterious online assistant. All this while many of his rivals were having fun, playing blitz or bughouse chess at regular evening parties. Well, everyone can draw their own conclusions but this guy, to state the obvious, was determined to win the Championship.

*Josip Asik*





I was only aware of one of my oversights during the game, but I could feel myself playing badly. I was very pleased that I did not let this get to my head and that once he missed ♗xf7, I took over the game pretty quickly and played very well in the rest of it.

■ **How did you keep your cool in the decisive game at the end?**

I am very good at focusing exclusively on the board in front of me when I am playing. Sometimes I get nervous before a game, even the night before, but once the clock starts nothing can distract me. I was also happy to have finally gotten a clear edge from the opening for the first time in the entire event, which built up my confidence.

■ **What was your biggest strength in St. Louis and what do you think was lacking in the play of Fabi, Naka and Wesley?**

I think I was pretty good at taking the chances I was given. Of course there were misses against Caruana and Hikaru, and the game with Zherebukh was sloppy, but for the most part I tended to win when I got a good position. Hikaru clearly was badly off-form and had his worst result in the last ten years, and probably the next ten years. Wesley slowed down after a quick 2-0 start and missed some chances, as he did against Akobian for example, and Fabiano was just less consistent than me. Of course all three of them are stronger than I am, but I really showed my best in an event when none of them showed theirs. I think it also helped that since I am not 2800, people were less content to make draws with White against me, and took more risks – this is surely how I made 5/6 with the black pieces. For example, I can't imagine Jeffery forcing the kind of draw he made with Wesley when playing against someone of my rating.

■ **One of our columnists, Robert Hungaski, believes you had prepared exceptionally well for the openings, while others, like Karsten Mueller and Alex Fishbein, praise your endgame skills. What is the truth?**

I definitely think my preparation for Black was excellent. I clearly did not have much punch with White, though the final round was an obvious exception. I was certainly very happy with my endgame play – normally I've not been too good at this in the past, but this time I surprised myself.

■ **How long do you intend to keep secret the name of your mystery second? Is it all about maintaining your joint collaboration?**

A good chess player never reveals who he works with! I certainly hope we can work more in the future. But by all

OF COURSE ALL  
THREE OF THEM  
ARE STRONGER  
THAN I AM, BUT I  
REALLY SHOWED  
MY BEST IN AN  
EVENT WHEN  
NONE OF THEM  
SHOWED THEIRS.

means, let the rumors and speculations continue. Maybe I'm being assisted by Fischer's ghost!

■ **It's been a long walk for you to get to the top but you've now reached some of highest peaks, not like a comet, but as a steady force and a fully articulated player. What were the most important moments in your career that had motivated you to keep on progressing?**

Finding motivation when things are not going well can be tough. If you work as hard as I do and don't see any improvement, it really tests your resolve to keep trucking along. I was stuck in the mid-high 2600s for three years before this recent breakthrough! I think the most defining moment of my career, when it came to my overall improvement, was realizing that I owed it to myself to work hard and make it as far as I can even when things were going badly, because I am so much better at chess than I could ever be at anything else.

■ **In a survey we conducted, the majority of our readers agreed that we should now talk about the "Big Four" in American chess. What do you think of that? And what do you think would be the result of a US "Big Four" double round robin tournament?**

I'd like to see the results of this survey! I'm certainly glad that I have inspired confidence in my fans, though there is no secret that I'm still not as strong as the others. 2717 and 2800 are relevantly different numbers, and all three of those guys are in and out of the 2800 level. I have shown that at

my best, I can play at this strength, but they are far more consistent than me, and all three have had performances before that dwarfed what I did in Saint Louis. If we were to play a double round robin, I'm sure I'd be a big underdog, but I would not expect to lose every time or anything like that. In time, maybe I can be as good as them some day.

■ **Did your family hold a congratulatory party for you after you won the US title? How did you celebrate your success?**

I was so tired, I wasn't in much mood for a party! But we went to my favorite restaurant the night I got back.

■ **What does this great success mean to you? What do you now want to achieve in chess?**

It was the biggest achievement of my career so far, but still a stepping stone along the way to bigger things. My goal is to be the World Champion. I will almost certainly fail, but players should always set their sights high, so that if they miss, they will probably still have done well. If I make it to #2, I'll have failed in my goal but will have had a very successful career.

MY GOAL IS TO  
BE THE WORLD  
CHAMPION. I  
WILL ALMOST  
CERTAINLY FAIL,  
BUT PLAYERS  
SHOULD ALWAYS  
SET THEIR SIGHTS  
HIGH.

# SAM SHANKLAND ANNOTATES







SAM SHANKLAND WON A TOTAL OF SIX GAMES IN ST. LOUIS. HERE HE SHOWS US HIS WINS AGAINST RAY ROBSON AND ZVIAD IZORIA. IN OTHER COLUMNS OUR READERS WILL FIND MORE OF HIS US CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES.

by **GM SAM SHANKLAND**

C

oming into this game, I was still a bit under the weather and playing Black for the second game in a row. I was hoping to consolidate my +1 score with an easy draw and chose the Open Ruy both as a surprise weapon and for its very forcing nature, where a lot of White's best tries have been exhausted and worked out to sterile equality. Luckily, Ray found an idea I had not reviewed before the game, and I did not remember the (admittedly meager) analysis I had after 10.♙f4. Rather than panicking, I was able to find a strong new idea over the board and quickly gained the upper hand.

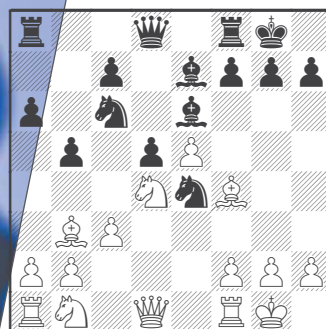
### C83

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Ray Robson    | 2660 |
| Sam Shankland | 2671 |

Round 4, US Championship, St. Louis 2018

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.c3 ♙e7 10.♙f4!? I had not recalled checking this move, but after the game I found that it was in my notes. It is hard to play a new opening with as many lines as the Open Ruy and both review and remember everything! 10.♘bd2 leads to the main lines.

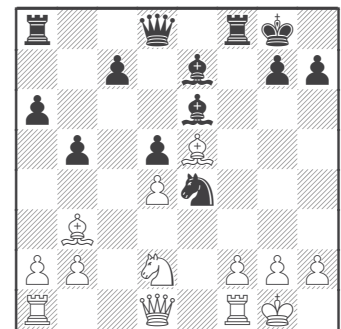
10...0-0 11.♘d4



11...♘xd4!? I was improvising over the board at this point, and I came up with the ...♘e4-d6 idea. It is probably not enough for equality, but it's a very decent try. 11...♗d7 was probably a better way to fight for equality.

12.cxd4 f6 13.♘d2 fxe5 A previous game saw 13...♘xd2, which is unconscionable to me. It just looks better for White after, say, 14.♗xd2 c6 15.♗ac1±.

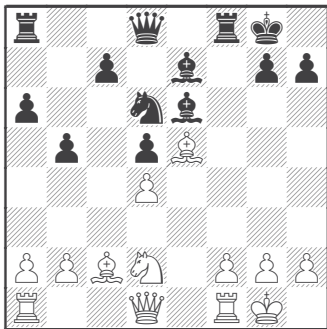
14.♙xe5



14...♘d6! Keeping the position complex. The knight eyes the c4 square.



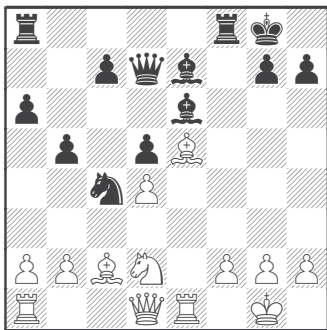
15. ♖c2



**15... ♗d7!** Developing a new piece and preparing for ... ♖c4 next. An immediate 15... ♖c4? would be a case of right idea, wrong time as after 16. ♗h5 Black is mated.

**16. ♗e1?!** This allows ... ♖c4. White had several good moves, but 16. b3 appeals to me the most. Black will never get in ... ♖c4 and should be a bit worse, for example 16... ♖f7 17. ♗h5 ♖g5 18. ♗e2 and I prefer White.

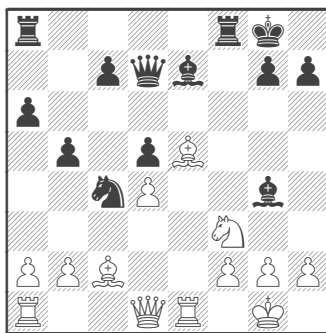
16... ♖c4!



Well calculated. None of White's tricks on the e-file work.

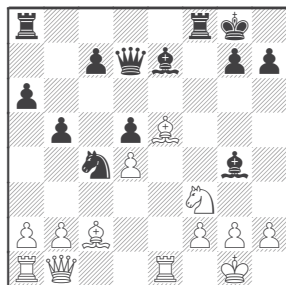
**17. ♖f3?!** This move in and of itself is not terrible, but it was played with a faulty idea in mind. 17. ♖xc7? ♖g4! 18. f3 ♗xc7 19. fxg4 ♖b4+. After 17. ♖xc4 dxc4 18. ♗e2 (18. ♗e3! was probably White's best option. He can dream of attacking and has the somewhat more pleasant side of equality.) 18... ♖b4! (Even 18... ♗ae8!? does not look so bad.) 19. ♖xg7 ♖xe1 20. ♖xf8 ♖xf2+! 21. ♗xf2 ♗xf8+ I would take Black.

17... ♖g4!



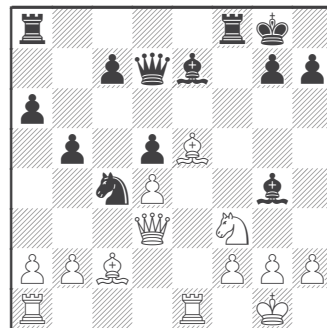
Threatening ... ♖xf3, and the knight cannot be defended. White must clear his queen off the d1 square with gain of tempo, but he chose the wrong way to do so.

**18. ♗d3?** I suspect Ray saw this position and automatically played ... ♖g4-f5 for Black in his calculations. It is a natural move, but entirely wrong. Once I played 18... g6, his body language quickly began to change as he realized he is much worse. 18. ♗b1! was the best try, placing the queen behind the bishop instead of the other way around.



The position is massively complicated, and nearly impossible for humans to play. 18... g6! An incredibly difficult move. (During the game my plan was to take on f3: 18... ♖xf3 19. ♖xh7+ ♖h8 20. gxh7 ♗xf3 when the position is roughly balanced, but anything can happen in the coming moves.) 19. ♖xg6 ♖f6! This is Black's cleanest option. (The machine's choice 19... ♖b4?! looks far less clear. 20. ♖g5 ♖f5 21. ♖xf5 ♗xf5 22. f4 ♖xe1 23. ♗xe1∞ is given by *Stockfish* and its nerves of steel claim Black is just better, but it looks very dangerous to me.) Now he really is threatening to take on g6, as well as on f3 when White's kingside will be much more compromised than Black's. The computer offers only one route to equality: 20. b3! (20. ♖d3 ♖xf3+ and White is in big trouble, for instance

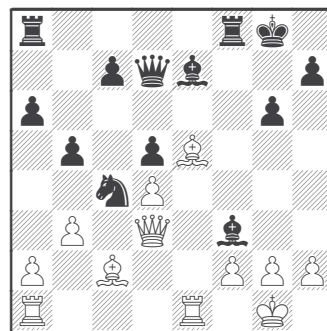
21. ♖xc4 bxc4 22. gxh3 ♖h8! and Black will take the g-file first.) 20... ♖xf3 21. bxc4! hxg6 22. gxh3 dxc4 23. ♗xg6+ ♗g7 24. ♗xg7+ ♖xg7+ I definitely prefer Black, but the game goes on.



**18... g6!** It's a little counter-intuitive to weaken the dark squares around the king, but fully justified. White faces two very powerful threats in ... ♖xb2 and ... ♖xf3, and he cannot prevent both of them. If 18... ♖f5? then 19. ♗c3± and White is ready for b2-b3 next move and has a nice edge.

**19. b3** During the game I expected 19. ♖g3, although after 19... ♖xf3 20. gxh3 ♖xb2 21. ♗e2 ♖b4! White's position is a train wreck. After 19. ♖d2 Black has any number of good continuations, of which I like 19... ♖f5! most for its simplicity. After 20. ♗e2 ♖xb2 21. ♗ab1 ♖c4+ Black is a clean pawn up.

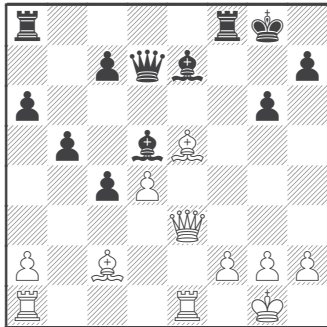
19... ♖xf3!



**20. bxc4** 20. gxh3 ♖xe5 is absolutely lost for White. After 21. dxe5 (21. ♗xe5 ♖d6 and ... ♗h3 is coming) 21... ♗e6 White's 4 vs 2 majority on the kingside is rather useless, whereas Black will easily crash through with ... c5-c4.

20... dxc4 21. ♗e3 ♖d5

Ray Robson,  
US Championship, St. Louis 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

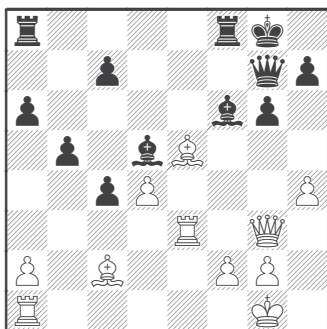


The dust has settled and Black has won a very critical pawn as well as improving his structure. Still, his king lacks cover and if White is able to carry out h4-h5, he will generate a lot of counterplay. Accurate play is needed to nip any attacking hopes in the bud.

**22. ♖g3 ♕f6!** First things first – contest White's most menacingly placed attacking piece!

**23. h4 ♖g7!** Another good move. Black prevents h4-h5.

**24. ♖e3 24.h5?** gxh5 and all White has done is open up lines for counterplay against his own king.



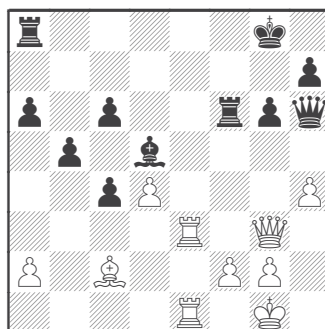
**24...c6!** A tough move to find, but a strong one. Every instinct I had was telling me to activate my a8-rook, but in fact it is more important to keep a secure structure in the center. Black plans ...♖h6 next, which will force White to take on f6 due to the threat of ...♕xh4, and then, with the queen on h6, h5 is never on the



cards. **24...♖h6** The immediate ...♖h6 was also possible, but I disliked **25. ♕xf6 ♖xf6 26. ♖e5**, somehow completely missing the simple **26...♗d6**. However, the text was obviously fine too.

**25. ♗ae1 ♖h6!** White is loath to take on f6 since it badly weakens his control of the all-important f4 square, but what choice does he have? ...♕xh4 is a massive threat.

**26. ♕xf6 ♖xf6**

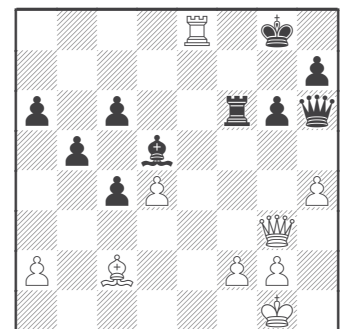


If Black can get his queen to f4, he should win easily. His queen will be the boss of the kingside and the center and she cannot be dislodged because any queen trade will immediately transpose into a won rook ending.

**27. ♖e8+ 27.f3 ♖f4** should win for Black

pretty routinely. I don't see much hope for counterplay.

**27...♖xe8 28. ♖xe8+**



Now I just had to calculate a way to get out of the checks.

**28...♔f7! 28...♔g7 29. ♖c7+ ♕f7 30. ♖e7 ♖c1+ 31. ♕d1 ♖xd1+ 32. ♔h2** and apparently Black wins here with ...g6-g5, which of course I did not consider. The text was by far the simplest route to a full point as **28...♖f8 29. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30.h5!** would allow White some counterplay.

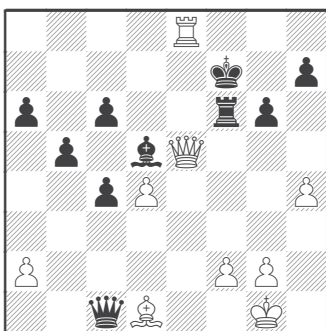
**29. ♖e5 ♖c1+!** Black clears the h6 square so as to provide the king with a refuge.

**30. ♕d1**

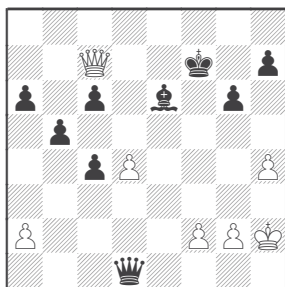




Playing hall,  
US Championship, St. Louis 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

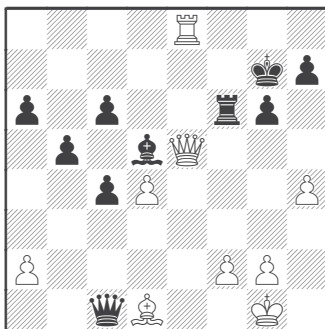


30...♔g7! White only gets a couple of checks, and then Black's queen can come to f4 on the next move, easily consolidating and winning. It turns out taking the bishop was indeed winning, but only with an entirely ridiculous computer sequence: 30...♖xd1+ 31.♔h2 ♜e6 32.♞xe6 ♜xe6 33.♞c7+

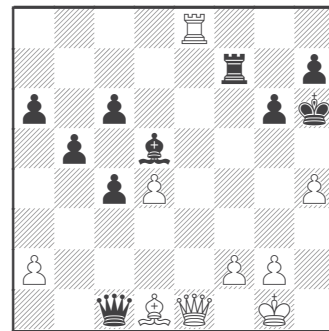


Black now needs eight "only moves" in a 33.♞e1

row. 33...♔e8! 34.♞b8+ ♔e7! 35.♞c7+ ♔d7! 36.♞e5+ ♔d8! 37.♞b8+ ♔c8! 38.♞d6+ ♔e8! 39.♞e5+ (39.♞xc6+ ♔d7 40.♞e4+ ♔d8 41.♞a8+ ♔e7 42.♞e4+ ♔e6 43.♞b7+ ♔f6) 39...♔d7! 40.♞g7+ ♔d8! 41.♞f8+ ♔c7! 42.♞e7+ ♔d7. But why bother with any of this when the far simpler ...♔g7 is there?



31.♞e7+ ♞f7 32.♞e5+ ♔h6 This is why I did not take his bishop. Black's king does not have to worry about any checks on the c1-h6 diagonal.



33...♞f4! As soon as Black safely plays ...♞f4, the game is over.

34.g4 ♔g7! No need for checks, lines, or discussion, Black is absolutely winning.

35.g5 c3 36.♞e5+ ♞xe5 37.dxe5 ♞d7 38.h5 gxh5 39.♔c2 ♔f7 40.♞c8 ♞d2 41.♞c7 ♞xc2 42.e6 ♞e2 43.♞xf7+ ♔g6 44.♔f1 ♞xe6

White resigned

## D41

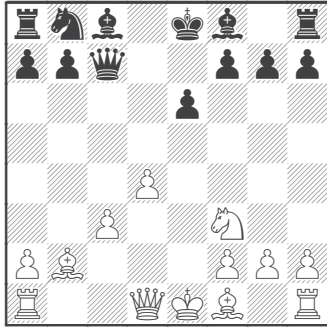
|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Zviad Izoria  | 2599 |
| Sam Shankland | 2671 |

Round 3, US Championship, St. Louis 2018

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 I thought the Semi-Tarrasch

was a good choice for this game. Solid, unexpected, but also with the prospect of imbalanced pawn structures.

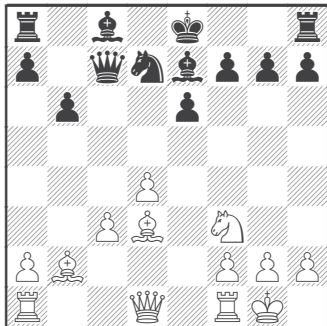
5.♖f3 c5 6.e3 cxd4 7.exd4 ♖xc3 8.bxc3 ♜c7 9.♗b2



I knew this move was not supposed to work, but over the board I could not figure out why. Of course the machine pointed it out later!

9...♖d7 10.♗d3 ♗e7 Best is 10...♗a3! when Black trades off a pair of bishops and has good chances of playing against the hanging pawns without worrying much about an attack. Then, after 11.♜d2 ♗xb2 12.♜xb2 b6, I prefer Black.

11.0-0 b6

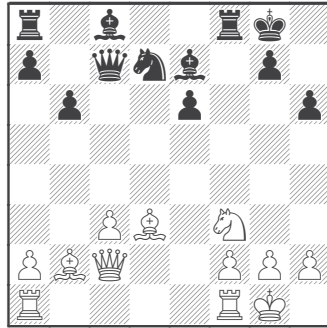


12.d5!? White wants a fight.

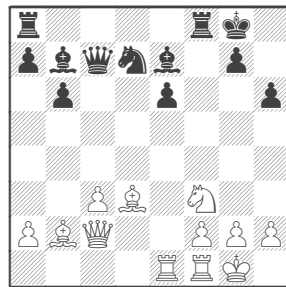
12...0-0?! I thought Black had it easy here, but I really underestimated White's attacking chances. 12...♖c5! may have been prudent.

13.dxe6 fxe6 14.♜c2! h6 I could remain safe by putting the knight on f6, but this is not really the right coordination. The knight belongs on c5 and the bishop on f6 to blunt its counterpart on b2. After

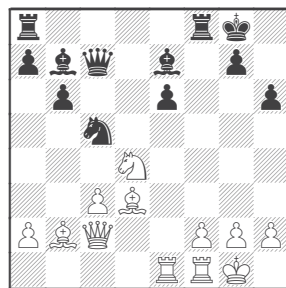
14...♖f6 15.c4 ♗b7 16.♖e5 White is slightly better.



15.♗h7+? This is rather toothless. 15.♜ae1! was of course the critical move, which I had spent a lot of time calculating. The variations are messy but I think Black should be fine after 15...♗b7!

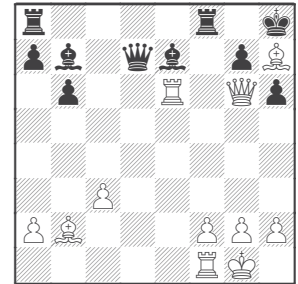


16.♖d4! (16.♜xe6 ♖c5 and White's pawn structure will be compromised after a coming ...♗xf3, while direct attack does not work, e.g. 17.♗h7+ ♖h8 18.♖e5 ♖xe6! 19.♖g6+ ♖xh7 20.♖xf8+ ♖g8 21.♖xe6 ♜c6 22.♜g6 ♗f6! is a very forcing and very straightforward variation.) 16...♖c5

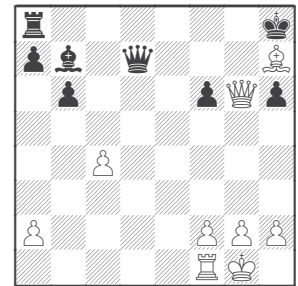


17.♖xe6! Now the fun begins! (17.♗c4 ♖h8 18.♖xe6 ♖xe6 19.♗xe6 ♗d6) 17...♜c6! 18.♗h7+! ♖h8 19.♜g6! ♖xe6 (According to the computer, the funny move 19...♜f7!? is stronger, but during

the game my intention was to take on e6.) 20.♜xe6 ♜d7

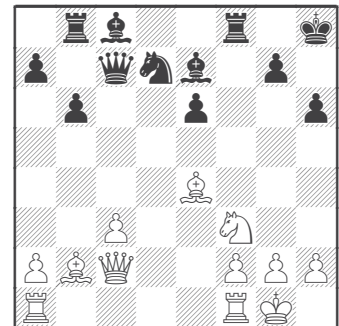


I thought Black was getting very good counterplay here, but I missed one key detail: 21.c4! (21.♜fe1? ♗c5!-+; 21.♜g4? ♗c8 22.♜fe1 ♗c5-+) 21...♗f6 22.♗xf6 ♜xf6 23.♗xf6 gxf6



Now it seemed to me that I was just winning the bishop, but I missed 24.♜e1! when the ♗b7 is loose at the end. Luckily, after 24...♜xh7 25.♜xh7+ (25.♜xf6+? ♖g8 26.♜e7? ♜b1+ Oops!) 25...♖xh7 26.♜e7+ ♖g6 27.♜xb7 ♜c8 Black should easily simplify into a technically drawn rook and three vs. rook and two.

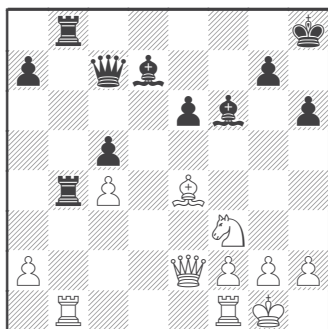
15...♖h8 16.♗e4 ♜b8



The machine still rather prefers White here, but I did not really believe Black could be worse.

17.c4 ♟f6 18.♟a3 ♞c5 19.♟ad1  
♟d7 20.♟xc5 bxc5 21.♟b1  
♟b4!? I was not ready to swap  
all the rooks just yet. 21...♟xb1  
22.♟xb1 ♟b8 just looks like a draw.

22.♟e2 ♟fb8



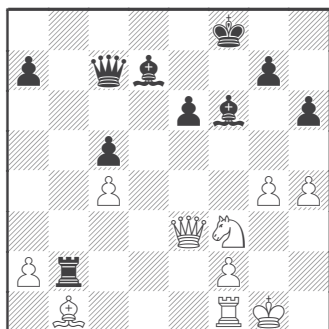
23.♟c2 White clearly wants ♟e4, so I  
need to evacuate my king to f8. But first,  
I decided to swap one pair of rooks.

23...♟xb1 24.♟xb1 24.♟xb1 ♟xb1+  
25.♟xb1 ♟f4= I thought this looked a  
little uncomfortable for White – although  
the engines disagree.

24...♟g8! Leaving the kill zone. Black's  
king will be very safe on f8 or e7.

25.h4 ♟f8 26.♟e3 ♟b2 The machine  
still swears by equality, but during the  
game I thought Black was really starting  
to take over. ...♟d6 is coming next and  
White's pieces look much worse than  
their black counterparts.

27.g4!?



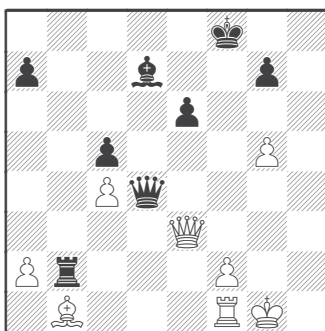
White is still fine, and it makes sense to  
look for counterplay by dislodging the beast  
on f6, but this move does carry its risks.  
27.♟d1. Taking the d-file is tempting, but  
only temporary. 27...♟a4! 28.♟e1 ♟d6.



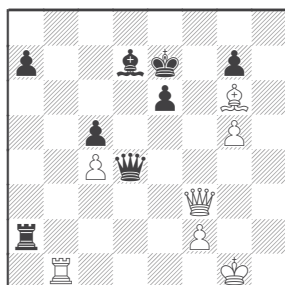
Sam Shankland,  
US Championship, St. Louis 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

27...♟d6! This was part of my plan  
anyway, and now Black is ready to put the  
bishop on d4. White is objectively fine, but  
must find several difficult moves in severe  
time pressure to avoid major problems.

28.g5 hxg5 29.hxg5 ♟d4 30.♞xd4  
♟xd4



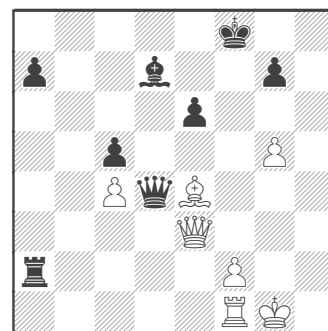
31.♟e4? A bad move. 31.♟f3+!  
would have held the balance. During  
the game I thought Black was basically  
winning after 31...♟e7 32.♟g6 ♟xa2, but  
I had missed the strong respite 33.♟b1!



...when Black cannot play ...♟a1 due to

♟b8+ at the end. 33...♟a1? (33...♟b2=  
Should promptly lead to a draw, but this  
♟f3+/♟g6+/♟b1 is a very hard sequence  
to find, even with time on the clock.)  
34.♟f7+ ♟d6 35.♟f8+ ♟c7. Without  
♟b8, White would be dead lost but, as it  
is, he wins on the spot by 36.♟b8+ ♟c6  
37.♟e4+ ♟xe4 38.♟b7+ ♟d6 39.♟xe4.

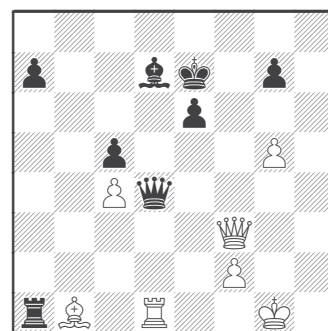
31...♟xa2?! 31...♟e7! was rather more  
accurate.



32.♟f3+? The final mistake. White  
could have offered some resistance by  
exchanging queens, 32.♟xd4 cxd4, when  
after 33.♟b1! some combination of ♟b1-  
b7 and c4-c5-c6 may give White enough  
counterplay to save the game.

32...♟e7 Now it's all over. The game ended  
more quickly than I expected, but Black is  
undoubtedly winning. He is a pawn up, has  
no weaknesses, and all of his pieces are  
better than their white counterparts.

33.♟d1 ♟a1! 34.♟b1



34...♟c6! The final finesse.

**White resigned** ■



I think so, although it's really tough to go from the top 30 to the top 10.

**David Beaudoin,**  
*Washington, NJ.*

I hope so. I'd like to see him get a wild card into the Sinquefeld Cup – that would be a great test against the best. The Olympiad will be a good test as well, a gold on board four would show a lot.

**Joe Byrnes,**  
*Kissimmee, FL*

If his past performances are any indication of the future, then it is a real possibility.

**Larry Behrendt,**  
*Ewing, NJ*

I don't know, it's kind of like Olympic competitions, if focus is given to a "Big 4" or "Big 5", does the idea of the "Big 3" lose significance?

**Jeff French,**  
*Lakeside, TX*

I am sure that we will. Congrats to Sam on the win.

**Melvin DuMars,**  
*Normal, IL*

I hope so but Sam Shankland still has to show that he can sustain his high level performances over the long haul.

**Christopher Moscinski,**  
*Bronx, NY*

I sure hope so! Sam is a great guy and deserves kudos.

**Dan O'Hanlon,**  
*Huntington, WV*

With Sam's entering the Top 30 @2700chess, we are already talking about the "Big 4" now!

**Mark Warriner,**  
*Henrico, VA*

I think Shankland has solidified his position as the clear #4 player in the U.S.

**Grandmaster Sam Shankland, the 26-year-old from Berkeley, CA, won the national title ahead of the "Big 3". Will we be talking about the "Big 4" in the near future?**

I am a little reluctant, however, to talk about the "Big 4" since the other three players have cracked the 2800 threshold and have been ranked among the top 10 players in the world.

**Eric Strachan,**  
*Tucson, AZ*

Yes. His games show the same "boring" moves characteristic of great players.

**Saad Al-Hariri,**  
*Alexandria, VA*

Looks like it, he's on a roll.

**Tony Wong,**  
*Glendale, CA*

I doubt it but I would love to see Sam rise to the top.

**Dennis Mays,**  
*Rochester, MN*

If Shankland continues to perform as he did in the US Championship, the answer is YES. However, right now, the

"Big 3" have much greater depth. For instance, how many times has Hikaru won the US Championship?

**Anonymous**

I think it is too early to tell. He needs to follow it up with another great performance.

**Jim Duffy,**  
*Gonzales, LA*

My feeling is he will be in the discussion as a minimum! He has been steadily marking his upward path with excellent results since making his final GM norm. You might argue he just needs the invites to the top events. If he gets them he will do well.

**Stan Evans,**  
*Louisville, KY*

It depends on his consistency. This is a big result, when will he repeat? It is all up to GM Shankland.

**Christopher Baumgartner,**  
*Des Plaines, IL*

Hopefully he gets his chance to prove it in some elite invitational tournaments soon. Our Olympiad team will certainly be a force.

**Ryan Billingsley,**  
*Fayetteville, AR*

No. Sam's victory in St. Louis is a terrific result, for which he deserves our applause. But not yet at the very top level, I think.

**Howard Decker,**  
*Rochester, NY*

GM Shankland has definitely earned the company of the "Big 4", the question is who would make it the "Big 5"?

**Mehran Divanbaigyzand,**  
*McLean, VA*

Sam is on a hot streak with title wins at the recent US Championship followed by the Capablanca Memorial. It

would therefore come as no surprise if Sam were to be included in the "Big 4" as he is also currently ranked No. 30 in the world.

**Manuel Infante,**  
*Oklahoma City, OK*

Perhaps Sam will now get more invitations to major international tournaments and make his mark there as well!

**Paul Matthews,**  
*Bridgewater, NJ*

I think that Sam has the potential to become the number one rated chess player in the United States.

**Christopher Johnson,**  
*Milton, FL*

No doubt.

**Larry Rydel,**  
*Clifton, CO*

I think Shankland's tactical prowess and his determination to prove himself, arising from his rising-star and underdog status, gives him a solid chance of being considered in the top echelon of the US chess arena. However only time will tell if he will become star-like, bright burning and constant, showing us time and time again that he belongs in the highest ranks of the US chess elite, or if he will be like a comet, only periodically gracing us with his bright brilliance.

**James D. Preece**  
*Huntington, WV*

That would be fantastic if we can talk about the "Big 4" soon!

**Mark Capron**  
*Iowa City, IA*

Maybe, I think he needs to mature a bit more.

**Jon Bilbao,**  
*Miami, FL*

PLAY IT SMART

# To Seal The Title, Go For The Exchange Caro-Kann!

**I**would like to kick-off my column by focusing on a game played in the final round, effectively sealing Sam's title. When selecting an opening variation, it's of paramount importance to consider what kind of pawn structure each option seeks to establish. The variation Black chooses in this game, despite its chaotic appearance, has the strategic goal of achieving a favorable isolated pawn (IQP) position. Therefore, if the IQP is a structure you are comfortable with (or of the type in which you wish to improve your understanding), keep reading!

So let's jump right in with today's topic: the Exchange Caro-Kann.

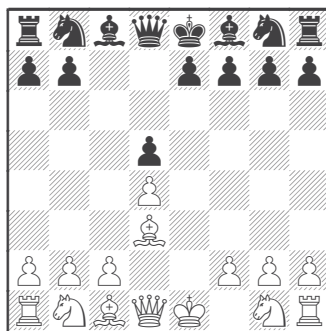
by **GM ROBERT HUNGASKI**

## B13

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Sam Shankland | 2671 |
| Awonder Liang | 2552 |

Round 11, U.S. Championship, St. Louis 2018

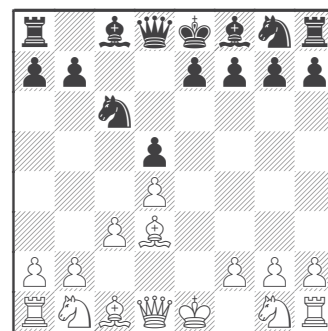
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.♔d3



According to the parameters I established above, from a practical point of view this is one of White's most interesting choices. If we prepare this variation with White, we are practically guaranteed to get this position in every one of our games against the Caro-Kann.

I see a promising future for the move 4.♔f3!? ♔f6 5.♔f4 ♔c6 6.c3 ♔f5 (6...♔g4 7.♔b3) 7.♔bd2 e6 8.♔b3 which actually transposes to

an interesting line from the London System!; alternatively, 4.♔f4 ♔c6 5.c3 ♔f6 6.♔d3 ♔g4 7.♔b3 leads back into the present game. **4...♔c6 5.c3**



**4...♔f6** The idea of adopting an IQP is not new. Previously Black's standard way of achieving it was with the move 5...♔c7

**A)** 6.♔e2?! ♔g4 7.h3 (7.f3 ♔d7 8.♔f4 e5 9.dxe5 ♔xe5 10.0-0 ♔d6 11.♔c2 ♔f6 when practice has proven that Black's IQP offers him a powerful initiative.) 7...♔xe2 8.♔xe2 e6 9.0-0 ♔d6 10.♔d3 ♔f6 11.♔e1 ♔h2+ 12.♔f1 ♔f4= C.Gallegos 2405 - J.Becerra 2535, Willemstad 2001.

**B)** 6.h3! ♔f6 7.♔f3 g6 8.0-0 (8.♔c2 ♔g7 9.0-0 0-0 ♔h5-f4) 8...♔f5 9.♔xf5 (9.♔e1 ♔xd3 10.♔xd3 ♔g7 11.♔bd2 0-0) 9...gxf5 10.♔e2

ASIDE FROM GIVING US ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING U.S. CHAMPIONSHIPS TO DATE AND CROWNING IT WITH ONE OF ITS MOST STUNNING UPSETS, SAM SHANKLAND PROVIDED US WITH SOME FANTASTIC GAMES THAT SHOWCASED TOPICAL OPENING VARIATIONS.



## THREE PILLARS OF OPENING PREP

The purpose of this column is to talk about topical openings. However, we won't search for novelties and we won't agonize over move-orders and transpositions (well, maybe a little). The idea is to take a step back and see the big picture. We want to understand why an opening has become popular, what the main ideas are and rank them accordingly. Rank them? Yes! But before we move on to specifics, let me tell you where I'm coming from.

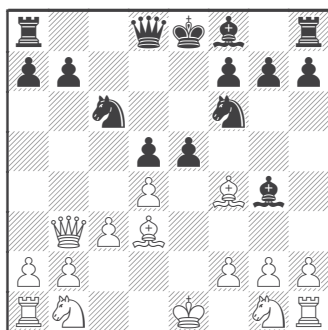
I've come to believe that the best way to know if I understand something (in this case a chess opening) is to try to explain it to somebody. If I can get my point across quickly and succinctly, then I know I have grasped it. If I cannot, then I know I need to keep working. Ideas that have often seemed clear in my mind would cause me to stumble and double-back when I'd try to articulate them.

Over the past few years, I have been working with many young, talented and competitive players. Often, during tournaments, we would have no more than 10-15 minutes to prepare an opening against a specific opponent. During this process, I had to learn how to take complicated lines and boil them down to their component parts, establishing general guidelines that could set the course during a live game. With this purpose in mind, I came up with three parameters for determining how "good" an

opening is. I call these the "Three Pillars of Opening Prep". They are:

(10.♖e1 ♔g7 11.c4; 10.c4) 10...e6 11.c4 looks OK for Black, but the structure is a far cry from the IQP Black was aiming for.

6.♙f4 ♙g4 7.♗b3 e5?!



A striking move that has become increasingly popular over the past year and which is the subject of our discussion. If one is to understand this move we must avoid becoming overwhelmed by the initial shock and instead ask ourselves "what is Black trying to achieve?"

The current paradigm in competitive chess is ruled by the idea of achieving strategic aims by tactical means. Black's last move is a clear example of

### CLARITY OF IDEAS *Is this line easy to play?*

This is the most important factor and one that is often ignored, particularly at the club level. One should not be playing an opening because it is fashionable or because your favorite player employs it. You should only play openings that you understand and feel comfortable with, duh! That being said, some openings are easier to understand than others. For example, the Najdorf Sicilian can divert into many different types of positions, so it's hard to generalize ideas. This would contrast with an opening like the Scandinavian, which allows us to determine the pawn structure early in the game.

### THEORETICAL VALUE *How good (objectively) is this line?*

Whether you understand the opening or not; whether you are likely to play it in a tournament game or not, is the position you want to play actually good? Not a bad question to be asking yourself! Sometimes a particular game can have a profound impact on us, distracting from the fact the variation might not be all that good. Again, we can see a stark contrast between the Najdorf and the Scandinavian. There's no question that the former is objectively better. But of course, that's not the only thing that matters...

### PRACTICAL VALUE *How likely are you to get this position in your games?*

It doesn't matter if you understand an opening better than anybody else, or if the opening is better than all the others...if you never get to play it! This parameter will only address the likelihood a particular position has of appearing in a tournament game.

Every opening we cover will be ranked in each of these categories on a scale from 1 to 5. The final score should reflect which side enjoys the greater overall value out of the particular diagrammed opening position, in this case the one after Black's 7...e5.



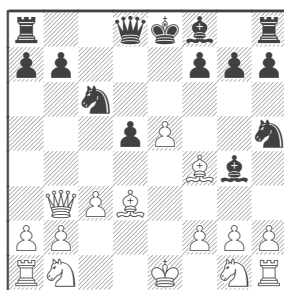


▲ Sam Shankland vs Awonder Liang. US Championship, St. Louis 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

this, as he will strive to trade his e-pawn for Black's d-pawn and thus achieve an IQP. Though this idea is strategically sound, my analysis leads me to believe it is fundamentally flawed. Let's see why...

Parenthetically, I should mention that there is nothing wrong with Black's main alternatives 7...♖c8, 7...♗d7 and 7...♘a5. **8.h3!** If this move seemed promising after Demchenko's convincing win (see below), then after this game it is surely to establish itself as the main line. However, it's worth considering the alternatives to fully appreciate the struggle of ideas each side tries to impose on the other.

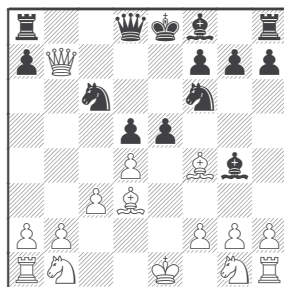
Let's start with the most obvious of White's choices to understand what Black is hoping for: 8.dxe5?! ♘h5



9.♙e3 (9.♗xb7 ♘xf4) 9...♗xe5 10.♙b5+ ♘c6 11.h3 ♙e6 12.♗d1 ♘f6 13.♘f3 ♙d6 14.0-0 0-0 Voila! Black has regrouped his pieces and enjoys a promising IQP, as seen in the game Wei Yu 2743 - D.Navara 2740, Yancheng 2018.

If White captures with the bishop instead, Black's play becomes less conceptual and must rely on tactical justifications primarily based on the pin along the e-file: 8.♙xe5?! ♗e7 9.f3 (9.f4 ♘h5 △...f6; 9.♙b5 ♘d7) 9...♗xe5 10.dxe5 ♗xe5+ 11.♗e2 ♙d7 12.♗d2 ♙c5 13.0-0-0 0-0 ♖I.Can 1791 - O.Girya 2505, Antalya 2017.

Lastly, White can grab a pawn while avoiding the structure Black desires. This might even be the critical line: 8.♗xb7!?

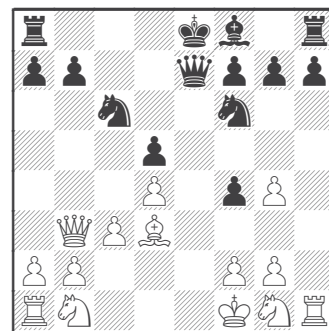


**A)** 8...exf4 9.♗xc6+ ♙d7 10.♗a6 ♗b8 11.b4 ♙d6 12.♘f3 0-0 13.0-0± Black's compensation is questionable.

**B)** 8...♗b8 9.♗xc6+ ♙d7 10.♗a6 exf4 11.♘f3 (11.b4!?) 11...♗xb2 12.0-0 ♙e7 13.♙e1 (13.♗xa7 0-0 14.♗bd2 ♗a8=) 13...0-0 14.♗bd2 ♙e8 15.♗xa7± Despite the bishop pair and active rook, it's not easy for Black to unleash the full potential of his pieces or get the pawn back for that matter. **8...exf4** Originally my silicon companion had found what seemed a substantial improvement, but things are never as easy

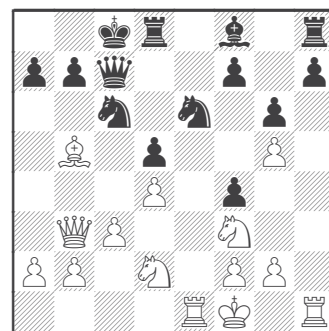
as they seem... 8...♘a5 9.♗c2 exf4 (if you're in the mood for absurd computer moves, then you can spend your afternoon looking at 9...♙d1) 10.hxg4 ♘xg4 11.♙f1! (11.♘f3 g6+; 11.♗e2+ ♗e7 12.♘h3 f3 13.♗xe7+ ♙xe7 14.gxf3 ♘f6 looks promising for Black due to the superior pawn structure.) 11...♘f6 (11...♙e7 12.♗xh7 ♗xh7 13.♙b5+ ♘c6 14.♗xh7±; 11...♙d6? 12.♗e2+ +-) 12.♗d2 ♙e7 (12...♙d6 13.♙e1+ ♘f8 14.♗df3) 13.♗df3 ♗c7 14.♗e5 ♙d6 15.♗gf3± White is likely to get his pawn back and maintain a superior pawn structure.

**9.hxg4 ♗e7+** Not 9...♘xg4? 10.♗xb7±. **10.♙f1**



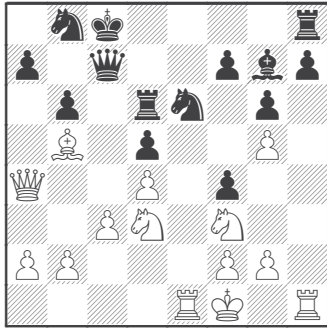
**10...0-0-0** 10...♗e4 11.♗c2 0-0-0 12.♗d2 ♙e8 13.♙xe4 dxe4 14.♙e1+- and White had pretty much wrapped it up in A.Demchenko 2671 - M.Yurtseven 2415, Lisbon 2018; 10...♘xg4 11.♗d2 ♗d7 (11...0-0-0? 12.♙f5+ +-) 12.♙e1+ ♙e7 13.♗df3 0-0-0 14.♘h3± White gets the pawn back and maintains a serious pull on the position.

**11.♗d2 g6** 12.♙e1 ♗c7 13.g5 ♘h5 **14.♙e2** 14.♗gf3 h6 15.gxh6 ♘xh6± allows Black to free up his position somewhat. **14...♗g7** 15.♗gf3 ♙e6 16.♙b5



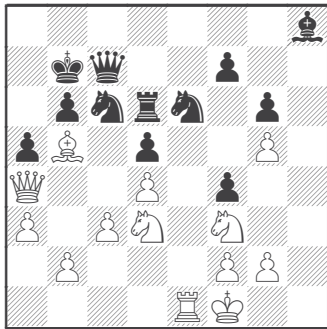
**16...♙g7** 16...♙b8 17.♗a4 ♙d6 18.♙xc6 ♗xc6 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.b4±; 16...♘a5 17.♗a4 a6 18.♙d3 ♙e7 19.c4!±.

17. ♖a4 ♜d6 18. ♘b3 b6 19. ♙c1 ♚b8  
20. ♙d3

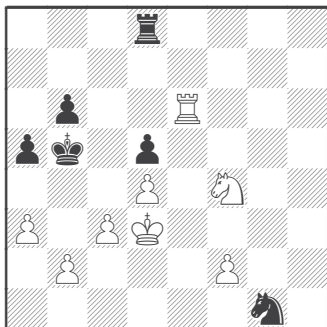


Despite the presence of so many pieces, Black is tied down to his weaknesses on h7, f4, d5 and the queenside.

20... ♙b7 21. ♙b4 ♜d8 22. ♙e5 ♜c7  
23. ♜b3 Black's position collapses, giving way to material losses.  
23... ♜hd8 Or 23... h5 24. ♙xd5 wins.  
24. ♜xh7 a6 25. ♙d3 ♙a7 26. ♜a4 a5  
27. ♙b5 ♙b7 28. ♙bd3 ♜g8 29. ♙f3  
♜h8 30. ♜xh8 ♙xh8 31. a3 ♙c6



32. ♙xc6+ ♜xc6 33. ♙de5 ♙xe5  
34. ♙xe5 ♜d6 35. ♜e8 ♜d8 If 35... ♙xg5  
36. ♙xf7 ♙xf7 37. ♜e7 winning.  
36. ♜xf7 ♙xg5 37. ♜xc7+ ♙xc7  
38. ♙xg6 f3 39. ♙f4 ♙c6 40. gxf3 ♙xf3  
41. ♜e6+ ♙b5 42. ♙e2 ♙g1+ 43. ♙d3



Threatening 44. ♙xd5! **Black resigned**

## CONCLUSIONS:

In terms of clarity of ideas it's hard to find a better option for White than the Exchange Variation. We basically know where every one of our pieces is supposed to go and the pawn-break we need to look for or beware of. This remains true after 7...e5, when Black must actually make some counter-intuitive moves to achieve his desired setup.

The theoretical value of 7...e5 is hard to determine since there is little material out there (both in terms of games and analysis), but my impression is that White will come out on top. My own analysis shows that with accurate play by White, Black is not able to achieve his desired IQP setup. It would seem that, in order to question the theoretical value of the Exchange Caro-Kann, Black would have to revert to his classical choices on move seven.

Practical value is another matter completely, as 7...e5 has tremendous potential as a surprise weapon. Once White goes into the Exchange Variation, he is at Black's mercy on move seven.

I would rank the diagrammed position (after 7...e5) as follows:

|                   | FOR WHITE | FOR BLACK |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|
| CLARITY OF IDEAS  | 5         | 2         |
| THEORETICAL VALUE | 4         | 2         |
| PRACTICAL VALUE   | 3         | 5         |
| SCORE             | 12        | 9         |

Therefore, the final score is 12-9 in White's favor, which would lead me to view 7...e5 with suspicious eyes (especially considering Black's very decent options). Nevertheless, I hope this article will get you to make smart decisions about the openings you choose. I will consider my efforts a success if at the very least you begin to ask yourself:

- Where are my pieces supposed to go?
- Once the desired setup is achieved, am I able to create/solve important problems?
- If I study (the Exchange Caro-Kann, for example), how likely am I to get this position?

GM Robert Hungaski was born in Stamford, CT, to an American father and an Argentine mother. He moved to Argentina at a very young age, which is where he learned to play chess at the age of six in an after-school program.

Soon after achieving the IM title, Robert moved back to the U.S.

At this time he began training with GM William Lombardy and, at his coach's behest, enrolled in the University of Connecticut.

Robert, now a Grandmaster, currently resides in New York City, but continues to travel extensively throughout Latin America.



If you would like to hear Robert's take on *what's going on* in an opening you play, then write to us at [editor@acmchess.com](mailto:editor@acmchess.com) | for **Play It Smart** with your request.





# DON'T MESS AROUND!

GM ZVIAD IZORIA HAS GAINED THE REPUTATION AS A GIANT-KILLER, AN UNDERDOG WHO DEFEATED THE GOLIATHS, CARUANA AND NAKAMURA.

by GM ZVIAD IZORIA

**N**ow everyone in the States knows who Zviad Izoria is! More than six-foot-four in height and not shy about having a king size meal, he looks like a giant. But in fact he made his name as a giant-killer, an underdog who defeated the Goliaths, Caruana and Nakamura. These were his only wins at the US Championship, and his overall result in the tournament wasn't that great because he also had three losses.

His wins might come as a surprise – indeed they are – but he has already had an impressive international career. Grandmaster Izoria left his native Georgia in 2006, and since then has been active firstly in Brooklyn, NY, and secondly on the West Coast, where he moved two years ago.

Zviad played three consecutive Olympiads for Georgia, from 2002 to 2008, twice he qualified for the World Cup, in 2005 and 2007, while as a teenager he was World Youth U16 Champion and twice European Junior U18 Champion. In the States he won “the richest open chess tournament in history” (at least up to that time), the HB Global Chess Challenge in Minneapolis, 2005.







MY GAME IS THE WINNER TAKE ALL  
 I LIVE ON THE EDGES  
 SO I'M SUBJECT TO A FALL  
 I AIN'T NEVER BEEN A LOSER  
 I AIN'T NEVER GONNA BE  
 I'M LIKE RUNNIN' IN A RINGER  
 YOU DON'T MESS AROUND WITH ME.

LYRICS: WAYLON JENNINGS  
*(Album: Waymore's Blues)*



Photo by Lennart Ootes

**? How did Wesley manage to escape?**

I think I was the one who escaped from Wesley! He didn't go for  $\Delta xe6$  which would have led to an unbalanced position that should objectively be rather favorable for him. [See the game on page 38 - Ed]

**In another column of this issue, GM John Burke criticized Fabiano's play against you – for adopting an approach of “playing the opponent, not the board”. Would you agree with that view? Did you have the feeling during the game that Fabi was continually going “over the edge”?**

Honestly, I didn't have that feeling. Early on he didn't go for a repetition, principally because I had only 3-4 minutes for my next six moves or so. Therefore I think that decision can be justified.

Later in the endgame we got down to a position with rook and two pawns and a knight each. We both had around five minutes left and he kind of lost control, giving me a pawn on g2 when even though objectively it should still have been a draw, it's not easy when you are low on time.

**Interestingly, two years ago at the Baku Olympiad, Nakamura surprisingly lost a game against another Georgian player, GM Mchedishvili. Are these defeats something to do with a “Georgian syndrome”, or is it more about Hikaru's playing style in that it opens up chances for his opponents as well? Did he go wrong psychologically against you?**

I don't believe it's a Georgian syndrome! Hikaru is an excellent player – it's just that he is prepared to take far more risks than the other elite players.

**? Being a chess coach, how would you teach your students to play against lower- and higher-rated players respectively?**

I don't have any special advice here. I try to teach my students to construct their game on a fundamentally sound basis. Make good decisions and fight until there are only two kings left on the board!

**? You run a chess school on the West Coast, in San Jose. How did your students and fans react when you came back?**

I work for a company called BayAreaChess and teach after-school classes, camp and club teams. I have some private students as well. As you can imagine I received lots of calls and emails during the tournament. Now more people ask to take photos of me and sign autographs! The students are happy as well. Even little kids have heard about my wins. I swear they almost respect me now!

**? What are your future ambitions in competitive chess? How much do you enjoy the game?**

I don't have any particular goals in chess at this point. I obviously love the game and hopefully I can find time to compete in more tournaments.

This was my first US Championship – which has become a super strong tournament in recent years. It is organized at the highest level and it was a great honor for me to be part of it. I enjoyed every minute of this great event!

This game was played in the 7<sup>th</sup> round of the US Championship. To everyone's surprise, Hikaru had started the tournament quite poorly with 3/6 and so I thought that even with the black pieces he would go for some unusual line and try to complicate things.

## A04

Zviad Izoria 2599

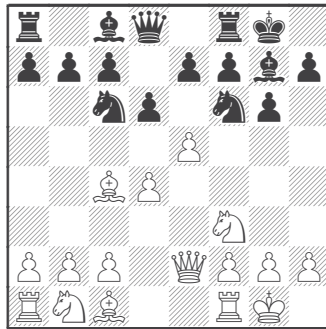
Hikaru Nakamura 2787

Round 7, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

1.♘f3 g6 2.e4 ♘g7 3.d4 d6 4.♙c4 ♘f6 5.♙e2 Not the most dangerous setup but it leads to a quiet positional game. I've played like this before in some blitz and rapid games as White and also had a few games as Black in this line.

5...0-0 6.0-0 ♘c6 One of my blitz games continued 6...♙g4 7.e5 dxe5 8.dxe5 ♘fd7?! 9.e6 ♘e5 10.exf7+ ♘h8 11.♙xe5! ♙xe5 12.♘xe5 ♙d4 13.♙d2 and White is better.

7.e5!?



Here I spent way more time than I should have. I was considering other options like 7.♙d1 or 7.h3 but they did not seem very dangerous for Black.

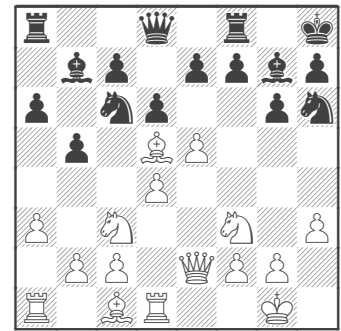
7...♘g4?! This came as a total surprise. I thought Black should have played 7...♘d7 8.e6 ♘b6 9.exf7+ ♘h8±.

8.h3 ♘h6 9.♘c3!? I just wanted to prevent Black from playing ...d6-d5.

9...♘h8?! 9...♘f5! 10.♙d1 dxe5 11.dxe5 ♘fd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♙e4 (13.♙e3?! c5 14.♘b5 ♙a5! 15.♘xd4 cxd4 16.♙xd4 ♙xe5=) 13...c5 14.♙g5 h6 15.♙e3 ♙f5±.

10.♙d1 Now White is much better. Obviously, I understood that Hikaru is a very resourceful player and I'd have to play really well to convert my advantage.

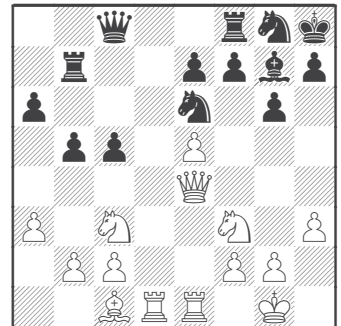
10...a6 11.a3 b5 12.♙d5 ♙b7



13.♙f4 Engines favor 13.♙e4 ♙e8 14.♙xh6 ♙xh6 15.♙h4 ♘g7 (15...♙g7 16.♘g5 h6 17.e6±) 16.g4± f6 17.♙e1, but it did not seem so clear to me during the game.

13...♙c8 14.♙e4 ♙b8 15.♙e1 I wanted to improve the position of my a1-rook.

15...dxe5 16.dxe5 ♘d8 17.♙ad1 ♘e6 18.♙c1 ♘g8 19.♙xb7 ♙xb7 20.♙e4 c5



▼ Zviad Izoria vs Hikaru Nakamura, US Championship, St. Louis 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

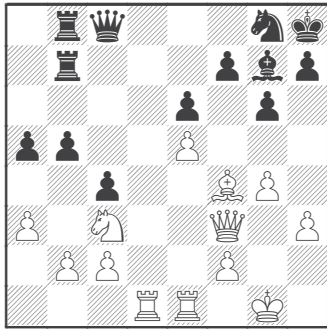




21.♖d5 I really like 21.b3!. The idea is to meet ...c5-c4 with b2-b4 controlling the c5 square.

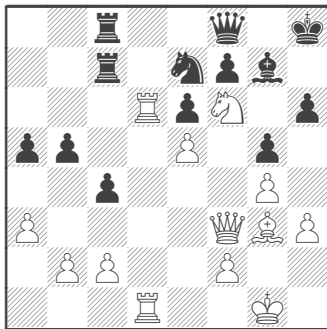
21...c4 22.♗g5 ♘xg5 23.♙xg5 ♜f5 23...♞d8 could have been a better defence.

24.♗c3 ♜fb8 25.♙c1 a5 26.g4 ♜c8 27.♜f3 e6 28.♙f4



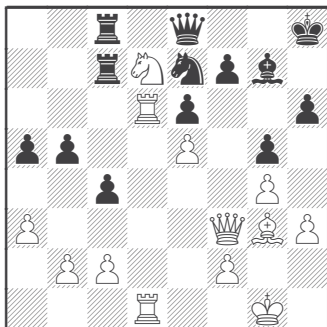
Now the knight will reach d6 or f6.

28...♗e7 29.♗e4 ♜c7 30.♙g3 ♜f8 31.♗f6 ♜bc8 32.♙d6 g5 33.♗d7 ♜e8 34.♗f6 with only a few minutes on the clock, I was just trying to get to move 40. 34...♜f8 35.♙ed1 h6



36.♗d7 36.h4! should win since Black has no counterplay here. Then 36...gxh4 37.♙xh4 ♗g6 38.♙g3.

36...♜e8



37.♗f6? 37.h4! wins easily. For example:

37...♗d5 (37...gxh4 38.♙xh4+-) 38.♙1xd5! exd5 39.♗f6 ♜f8 (39...♙xf6 40.♜xf6+ ♗g8 41.hxg5+-) 40.hxg5+-.

37...♙xf6! 38.exf6 ♗g6 39.♜e4?! 39.♙a6 ♗d7 40.♙xd7 ♜xd7 41.♙xa5±.

39...c3 40.b3 a4 41.bxa4 41.b4! was better.

41...bxa4± I realized that a big part of my advantage had disappeared so I had to start over again.

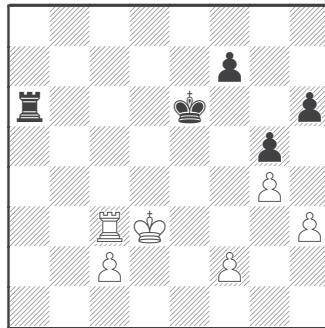
42.♙a6 e5 43.♜xa4 I was not sure about 43.♙xa4 ♜c6.

43...♜xa4 44.♙xa4 ♜c6 45.♙a5 ♜e8 46.♙dd5 ♙xf6 47.♙xe5 ♗xe5 48.♙xe5 ♙xe5 49.♙xe5 ♙a6 50.♙c5 ♙xa3

51.♗f1 I'm not certain that this is winning but at least I should have good chances.

51...♗g7 52.♗e2 ♗f6 53.♗d3 53.♙c6+ ♗e5 54.♙xh6 ♗d4! 55.♙d6+ ♗c4 56.♗e3 ♙a1 should lead to a draw.

53...♙a6 54.♙xc3 ♗e6

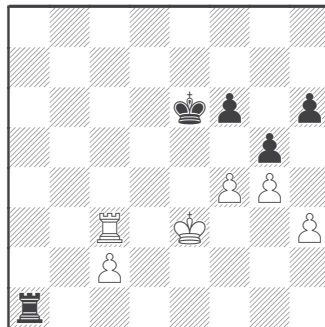


55.♗e4? 55.♗d4!±.

55...♙a4+ 56.♗e3 f6 56...h5!.

57.f3 ♙a1?! 57...h5! = should be enough for a draw.

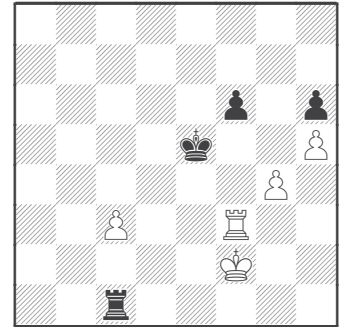
58.f4



58...gxh4?! Best is 58...f5! 59.♙c6+ ♗d5 60.♙xh6 ♙a3+!.

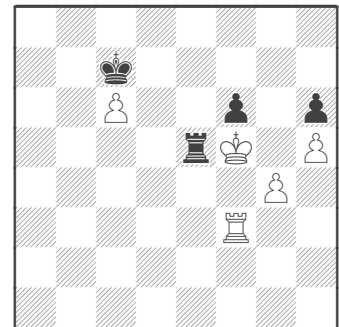
59.♗xf4 ♙a4+ 60.♗g3 ♗f7 61.♙c5 ♙a3+ 62.c3 ♙a1 63.♗f4 ♙h1 64.♗g3 ♙g1+ 65.♗f2 ♙h1 66.♗g2 ♙c1 67.h4 ♗e6 68.h5 ♗d6 69.♙f5

♗e6 70.♙f3 ♗e5 71.♗f2



71...♙c2+ 71...♙b1 72.♙f5+ ♗e6±.

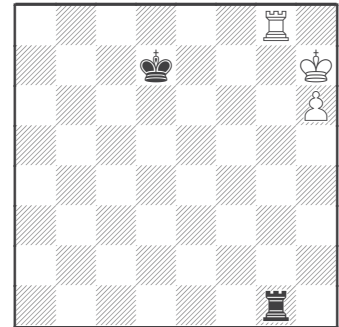
72.♗g3 ♗e6 73.♗f4+- ♗f7 74.♗e4 ♙d2 75.c4 ♗e6 76.♙c3 ♙g2 77.♗f3 ♙g1 78.c5 ♗d7 79.c6+ ♗c7 80.♗f4 ♙f1+ 81.♗e4 ♙f2 82.♙f3 ♙e2+ 83.♗f5 ♙e5+



84.♗xf6 84.♗g6! was simpler.

84...♙g5 85.♗f7 ♙xg4 86.♙f6 ♙g5 87.♙xh6 ♙c5 88.♙h8 ♙xc6 89.♗g7 89.h6?? ♗b7=.

89...♙c1 90.h6 ♙g1+ 91.♗h7 ♗d7 92.♙g8



92...♙e1 and Black lost on time. A continuation might be 93.♙g6 ♙e2 94.♗h8 ♙e8+ 95.♙g8 ♙e1 96.h7 ♗e7 97.♗g7 ♙g1+ 98.♗h6 ♙h1+ 99.♗g6 ♙g1+ 100.♗f5.

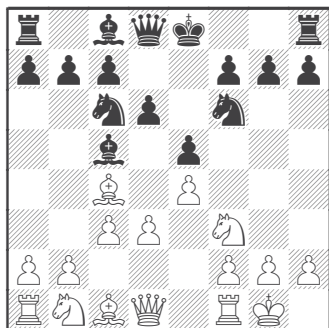
Black resigned



## C54

Fabiano Caruana 2804

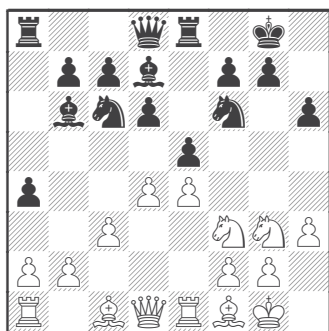
Zviad Izoria 2599

Round 4, US Championship,  
St. Louis 20181.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3  
♜f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0

6...h6!? I don't think this is necessary but it stops ♗g5 and also in some cases Black can even try pushing ...g7-g5-g4 in some lines, particularly if White plays h2-h3.

7.♙e1 0-0 8.h3 a5 8...a6 is another option. 9.♜bd2 a4 10.♜f1 10...♙b5 ♙d7 11.♙xa4 ♙xa4! 12.♙xa4 ♜b4 13.♙d1 ♜xd3 leads to a dangerous initiative, but that's pretty well known I think.

10...♙d7 11.d4 ♙b6 12.♜g3 ♙e8 13.♙f1



13...♙b8!? This is apparently a new move. In fact I did not find many games in the database after 13.♙f1. Of course, Black has other options as well. I just wanted to play ...♙a7 putting pressure on the d4 pawn and forcing White either to push d4-d5 or capture on e5 which should be good for my b6 bishop.

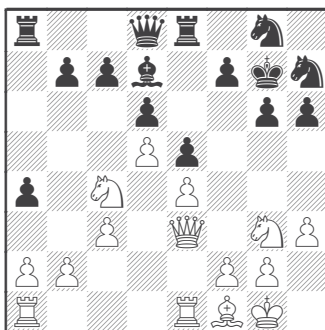
14.d5 ♜e7 15.♜h4 ♜h7 15...c6 was very interesting.

16.♙f3 ♙d8 17.♙d2 ♜eg8 The

engine does not like this move but as the position is complicated I was spending lots of time and unable to come up with a better plan.

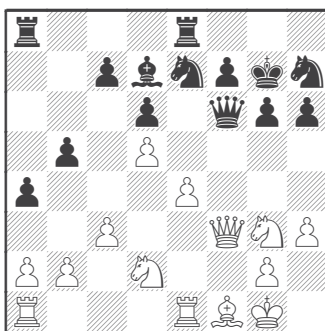
18.♜hf5 g6 19.♜e3 ♜g7 Now if I manage to play ...♜h7 Black might have some attacking potential with either ...h5-h4 or ...♙h4/♜g5, so it makes sense for White to endeavor to trade the dark-squared bishops.

20.♜c4 ♙a7 21.♙e3 ♙xe3 22.♙xe3 ♜h7

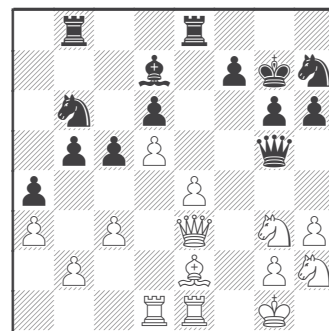


23.f4 White needs to start his own play in the center, otherwise Black will either play ...h5-h4 or ...♙g5 with decent play on the kingside. Also the weakening of the e5 square is not dangerous for White as it's almost impossible for the black knight to get there and meanwhile the d4 square can be useful for the white pieces. 23...b5 24.♜d2 exf4 25.♙xf4 ♙f6 26.♙e3 ♜e7! Threatening ...♜xd5.

27.♙f3



27...♙ab8! I wanted to prepare ...c7-c5 which would deny White use of the d4 square. 27...c5?! immediately did not work because of 28.dxc6 ♜xc6 29.♙xb5. 28.a3 c5 29.♙ad1 After 29.dxc6 ♜xc6 the b5 square is now protected. 29...♜c8 30.♙e3 ♜b6 31.♜f3 ♜g5 32.♜h2 ♜h7 33.♙e2 ♙g5 34.♙f2 ♙f6 35.♙e3 ♙g5



I was content with a repetition as I did not have much time on the clock and thought the position was still roughly equal.

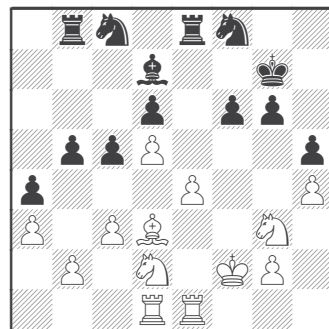
36.♙f3 This move is a mistake but I completely understand that Fabiano wanted to play on.

36...♙f6 36...h5 was stronger.

37.♙d3 ♙xf3 38.♜xf3 f6 39.h4!

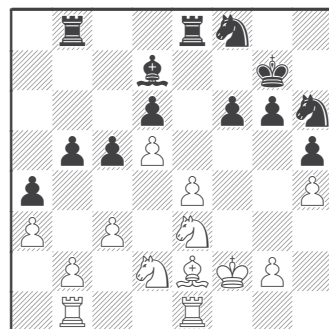
Blocking ...♜g5-f7-e5.

39...h5 40.♜f2 ♜f8 41.♜d2 ♜c8



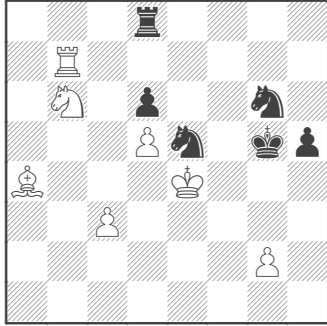
I was very happy here. We had now passed the first time control and I think Black even stands a little better here.

42.♙b1 ♜e7 43.♜gf1 ♜g8 44.♜e3 ♜h6 45.♙e2

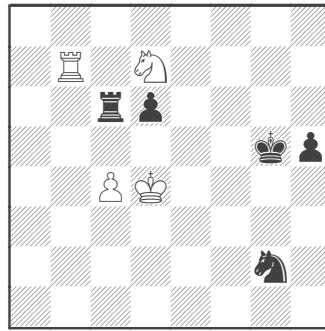


45...f5?! 45...c4! was a better choice. Black will either play ...f6-f5 next or transfer the f8-knight from d7 to c5 or e5. I think this is rather an unpleasant endgame for White.

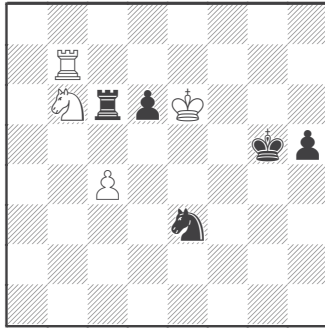
46.b3! axb3 47.♖xb3 c4?! 48.♖b4  
fxe4 49.♖eb1 ♖a8 50.a4 ♖xa4  
51.♖xa4 bxa4 52.♜dxc4 ♜f7 53.♖b7  
♜f6 54.♙d1 ♖a8 55.♜b6 ♖d8  
56.♜ec4 ♙b5 57.♜d2 ♙d3 58.♜e3  
♜e5 59.♙xa4 g5 60.hxg5+ ♜xg5  
61.♜xe4+ ♙xe4 62.♜xe4 ♜fg6



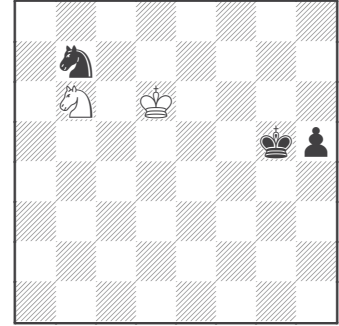
Somehow we got to this point. White  
is a pawn ahead but Black has enough  
counterplay with ...♖f8-f4 or even ...♜h4  
in some cases, which makes it very  
difficult for White to consolidate.  
63.♜d7 ♖c8 64.♙c6 ♜xc6 65.dxc6  
♖xc6= 66.♜d4 66.♖b5+=.  
66...♜f4 67.c4?! 67.♖b5+=.  
67...♜xg2



68.♜d5?! 68.♖b5+=.  
68...♖c8 69.♜b6?! 69.♜xd6 ♖xc4  
70.♖b5+ should be a draw.  
69...♜e3+ 70.♜e6? 70.♜e4 ♖e8+ 71.♜f3+.  
70...♖c6? 70...♖h8!+=.



71.♜d7? Correct is 71.♜d5 ♖xc4  
72.♖g7+ ♜h4 (72...♜h6? 73.♜xe3 ♖e4+  
74.♜f7 ♖xe3 75.♖g6+ ♜h7 76.♖g7+=)  
73.♜f6+.  
71...♜xc4!+= 72.♜xc6 ♜a5+ 73.♜xd6  
73.♜c7 ♜xb7 74.♜xb7 h4 75.♜c4 h3+=.  
73...♜xb7+



74.♜d5 74.♜e5 h4 75.♜e4 ♜g4 76.♜d5  
♜d6+ 77.♜e3 ♜g3 78.♜f4 ♜f5+ 79.♜e4  
♜e7 80.♜e3 ♜g6 81.♜xg6 h3 wins.  
74...♜f4 75.♜c4 h4 76.♜d2 h3  
77.♜f1 ♜d8 78.♜d4 ♜f7 79.♜d5  
♜e5 80.♜d4 ♜g4 81.♜d3 ♜f3  
White resigned

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# WHATEVER HAPPENED TO “THE BIG 3”?

Before the start of the Championship the main question was which one of the “Big 3” would display the best form and eventually top the field. The favorite was surely Caruana who was competing straight after winning both the Candidates and Grenke tournaments!

**R1** In the first round So showed his class by outplaying Zherebukh in the middlegame.

**R2** Both Caruana and So boldly claimed the advantage of the white pieces against Lenderman and Onischuk, respectively, but Nakamura was not given any chance to do the same by Zherebukh’s rock-solid Petroff.

**R3** Caruana struck again, this time revealing a very broad opening repertoire by choosing the Benoni Defense as Black. After two wins in a row Wesley found himself under serious pressure from Liang who, however, then failed to deliver a final blow and the game fizzled out to a draw. Nakamura faced a very similar situation to that of So when facing Onischuk and with the same result. Meanwhile Shankland came under the spotlight by winning the Californian derby against Izoria.

**R4** This round saw a major upset when Fabiano lost as White after over-pressing vs. Izoria. So pushed hard against Lenderman, but the latter defended with great accuracy and was eventually rewarded with half a point. However

Shankland gradually outplayed Robson for a second consecutive win and caught up with the leaders.

**R5** The biggest fight was seen in the Shankland vs. Caruana game. Wounded Fabiano opted for an extremely risky opening sideline, but Sam was fully prepared and up to the task until move 40, when he missed the best continuation and allowed his opponent to escape with a draw.

**R6** Wesley seemed to be losing the sharpness necessary to win games, while Hikaru too struggled to score full points with another draw leaving him way behind the leaders. Fabiano kept complicating matters, regardless of whether he was playing with the white or black pieces, and this time it yielded him dividends with a win against Robson. In the meantime Akobian collapsed and handed over the sole lead to Shankland.

**R7 & 8** In the next two rounds, Shankland faced So and Nakamura, respectively, with both games ending in a draw. Caruana managed to catch up with Shankland after beating Akobian in round 7 and then drew with So in round 8, which left Wesley half a point behind the two leaders. Izoria created another shocker by outplaying Nakamura in round 7, thus ending any realistic hopes his opponent may have had of winning the Championship.

**9R** The only decisive result saw another change on the leaderboard. In a

complicated struggle against Zherebukh, Shankland not only got on top of the game but also the tournament standings. On the other hand, Nakamura hesitated with an intended piece sac, thereby failing to punish further risky play by Caruana and ending the game with a draw by repetition.

**R10** Only a single draw – that between Robson and So. However Nakamura finally managed to score his first win, while Caruana almost effortlessly punished Zherebukh’s unusual play and Shankland routinely transposed to a winning endgame against Onischuk.

**R11** So vs. Nakamura was one of those frequently seen “heavyweight draws” where the balance was never upset in the course of 30 moves. After starting with two wins, Wesley had now added nine consecutive draws (!) to finish clear third, whereas Hikaru was able to score only 50%, with just one win, to finish in shared fourth place – certainly not what he expected before the tournament.

Fabiano managed to win surprisingly quickly against Onischuk, who probably had one of his worst ever Championship performances – coincidentally in the very same year he was inducted into the US Chess Hall of Fame.

At this moment, Sam was facing a serious task: he had to win on demand in order to avoid tie-breaks and finish his dream tournament in style. And, yes,

everything went according to plan: he chose a rare, but sufficiently venomous line against the expected Caro-Kann, and increased the pressure with each move until Liang finally resigned in an endgame where he was clear two pawns down.

Scoring an undefeated “+6” in such strong company, winning the title of US Champion, and crossing the “2700 mark” for the first time in his life – all this was a long-time dream come true for Shankland, whose years of hard work had now paid off to the maximum!

US CHAMPIONSHIP, Saint Louis, MO, April 17-30 2018

| RK | NAME                | ELO  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | PTS |
|----|---------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-----|
| 1  | SAM SHANKLAND       | 2671 |   | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 8½  |
| 2  | FABIANO CARUANA     | 2804 | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | ½ | 1  | 1  | 1  | 8   |
| 3  | WESLEY SO           | 2786 | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1  | ½  | 1  | 6½  |
| 4  | HIKARU NAKAMURA     | 2787 | ½ | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½  | 1  | ½  | 5½  |
| 5  | ALEKSANDR LENDERMAN | 2599 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 | ½  | ½  | 1  | 5½  |
| 6  | RAY ROBSON          | 2660 | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ |   | 1 | 1 | ½ | 0  | 1  | ½  | 5½  |
| 7  | ZVIAD IZORIA        | 2599 | 0 | 1 | ½ | 1 | ½ | 0 |   | ½ | 0 | ½  | ½  | ½  | 5   |
| 8  | JEFFERY XIONG       | 2665 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | 1 | 0 | ½ |   | ½ | ½  | ½  | ½  | 5   |
| 9  | AWONDER LIANG       | 2552 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ |   | ½  | 0  | ½  | 4½  |
| 10 | YAROSLAV ZHEREBUKH  | 2640 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ |    | ½  | ½  | 4½  |
| 11 | VARUZHAN AKOBIAN    | 2647 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½  |    | 1  | 4½  |
| 12 | ALEXANDER ONISCHUK  | 2672 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½  | 0  |    | 3   |



# Play The Board, Not The Opponent!

by **GM JOHN BURKE** |||

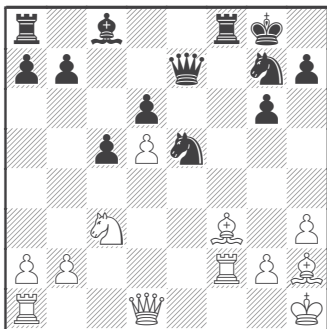
lower rated guys. This is what I'd like to analyze in a four game stretch by Caruana, rounds 3-6. These games were early in the tournament, but were critical and in my opinion show Fabi both at his absolute best and absolute worst.

29

isn't ideal, but it is necessary to distract the e4 knight. After 15...♙e5?! 16.♙xh5 ♙xh2 17.♙xh2 ♙e5+ 18.♙h1 ♙xh5 19.♙xf2±, White is down a pawn but Black still has to suffer to get his pieces out while protecting his weak king and weak d6 pawn.

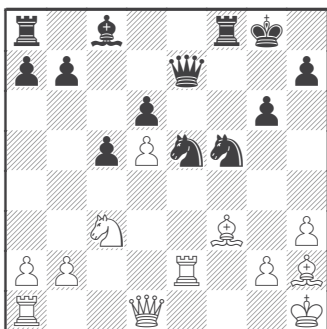
16.♙xc3 ♙g7 Regrouping to f5, ending the strange journey of this knight.

17.♙f3 ♙d7 18.♙xf2 ♙e5



Black is by no means better here, but he has reached an unbalanced position with chances for his opponent to go wrong, which was exactly what he was aiming for. This is Fabi at his best in terms of opening preparation. He took a risk by playing the Benoni, which I don't think he would venture against So or Nakamura. However, it was a controlled risk. His plan with ...♙h5 was objectively good and not some wild speculation, such as was seen in his upcoming games...

19.♙e2 ♙f5



20.♙xe5! White can't let Black develop and consolidate his extra pawn.

20...♙xe5 21.d6! Once you say "A", you should really say "B". 21.♙e1!? Regaining the pawn, but allowing Black a very pleasant position with a knight on d4. 21...♙d4 22.♙xe5 ♙f6±.

21...♙xd6

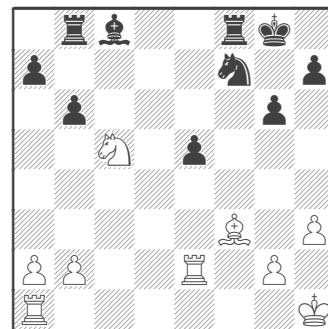
**John M. Burke** is an American chess star on the rise!

The 16-year-old grandmaster from Brick, New Jersey, already stunned the world in 2015 by breaking a record as the youngest player ever to surpass 2600+ ELO points. Recently, he has again had a successful run. He won two consecutive tournaments in Saint Louis (2017) and Charlotte (2018) and earned his final GM norms.

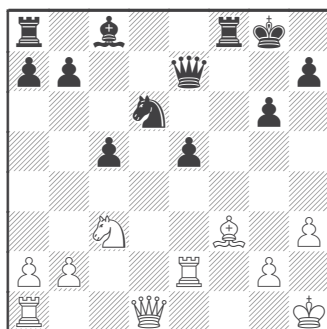
John's GM title was officially confirmed at the FIDE Congress in April 2018.



22...♙f7 23.♙e4 ♙b8 24.♙xc5 ♙xc5 25.♙xc5 b6



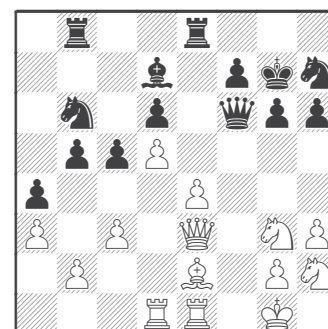
Black is up a pawn, which Fabi converted in 49 moves. A good game against a very strong opponent, which put him at 2½ points through the first 3 rounds. But disaster soon struck. **White resigned**



22.♙d5+ This is inaccurate but understandable. It feels like the point of d6 was to clear the d5 square, so it must now be utilized. Apparently there were better options, though. 22.♙d5 ♙g7 23.♙c3 This is the bizarre suggestion of my engine. There isn't a good way to handle the attack on the knight, and ♙d5+ is looming under better circumstances than in the game. 23...♙f5 24.♙d5+ ♙h8 25.♙xe5 ♙d4 Black remains a pawn up, but lags in development, so White should be fine.

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Fabiano Caruana | 2804 |
| Zviad Izoria    | 2599 |

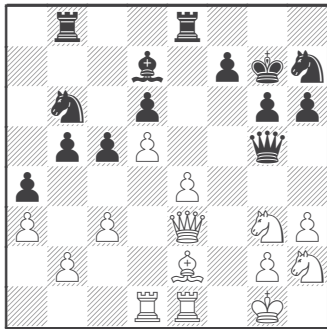
Round 4, US Championship, St. Louis 2018



Here Fabi is White against one of the lowest rated players in the tournament, Zviad Izoria. Understandably, he is looking for a win. However, the opening has surely not gone the way he had hoped, and Black's position is more comfortable, mostly due to his dark square grip. For example, if he could get a knight to e5, it would be a dream come true. Basically, White should go for some activity, since if Black gets a grip on the position, it will be a positional nightmare for White.

**33... ♖g5** Because of all this, Izoria seeks to exchange queens, limiting White's attacking potential.

**34. ♖f2 ♖f6 35. ♖e3 ♖g5**



In my opinion, this is the most critical moment of Fabi's entire tournament. He has to decide whether or not to avoid the repetition.

**36. ♖f3?! Now**, I'm not nearly qualified to criticize a 2800 player's decisions. But this strikes me as making the age-old mistake of playing the opponent, and not the board. After all, Izoria is outrated by over 200 points. Even in a slightly worse position, Fabiano considers it appropriate to risk playing on. The main problem I have here is that I don't even see a plan for White. What is his next move? The queen on f3 takes away the most natural square to get the h2 knight back in the game.

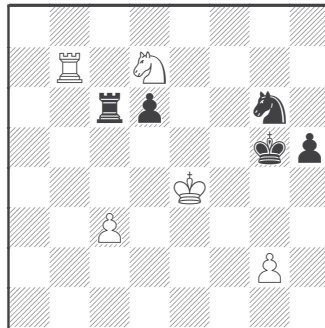
**36... ♖f6** Izoria continues the queen chase, but I'm curious what would have happened after a different move: 36...h5! gaining space and saying "Your turn." I don't see what White has accomplished by avoiding the repetition. Black is just better, and none of White's pieces are inspiring.

**37. ♔d3** Again, allowing the endgame seems to me a case of underestimating the opponent. But okay, it's not like

White is clearly worse. He is just very slightly worse, in my opinion. There is plenty of reason for Fabi to think that he can create chances here. And that's exactly what he did! He got in the move b2-b3 later, but Izoria did not cave and soon the time finally came to accept that a draw was the logical result.

Let's jump to the critical moment!

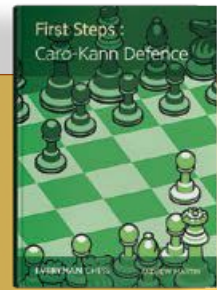
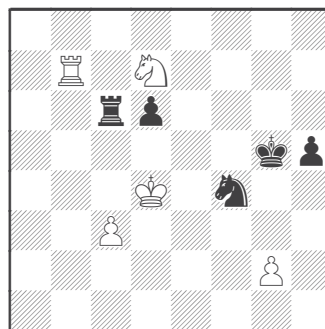
[See full game on page 26 – Ed.]



The game has been more or less well played by both sides since the opening. Now 66. ♔b5+ is a cold draw.

**66. ♔d4 66. ♔b5+ ♔h4** (After 66... ♔h6 67. ♔f6 either the h-pawn comes off the board or Black has to suffer the inconvenience of defending it. For example, 67... ♔e5 68. ♔f5 creates the threat of ♔b7.) 67.g3+ ♔xg3 68. ♔xh5=. This is one of many drawing lines. Obviously Fabi saw the idea of ♔b5 and ♔f6. I think his main problem is that he still felt obligated to play for a win through inertia. After all, he had fought back from a slightly worse position in the opening to a game with chances for both sides. However, this causes him to lose objectivity and play 66. ♔d4, which, although it is still fine, is a step in the wrong direction.

**66... ♔f4** Of course! Black's h-pawn will be very dangerous.



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By Andrew Martin

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**EVERYMAN CHESS**

**67.c4 67. ♔b5+** is still possible and is in fact the last chance to make a simple draw, e.g. 67...d5 68.g3 ♔e2+ 69. ♔xd5 ♔xc3 70. ♔e4+ ♔g4 71. ♔f6+.

**67... ♔xg2** Now it's far from easy, and in time trouble the game got out of control for Fabi, ending in a painful defeat on move 81.

**White resigned**

The opening of the following game was just downright puzzling. I guess Fabi wanted to create something original very early on, but it seems he was just tilted from his game against Izoria the previous day.

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Sam Shankland   | 2671 |
| Fabiano Caruana | 2804 |

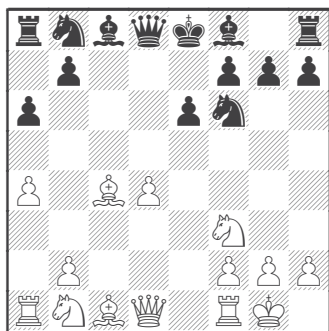
Round 5, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3. ♔f3 ♔f6 4.e3 e6  
5. ♔xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7.a4 cxd4 8.exd4**



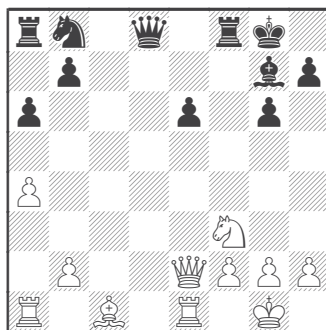


▲ Ray Robson vs Fabiano Caruana,  
US Championship, St. Louis 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



**8...g6?** This move has never been played before, and with good reason. It's just bad! Black doesn't have time to fianchetto. According to the chess24 timestamps, this move was played in 15 seconds. I genuinely don't think it was a preparation mishap. I think it was over the board inspiration gone terribly wrong. And I also think that just a minute of extra thought would have shown Fabi that this move simply cannot be played.

**9.♘c3 ♙g7 10.d5!** Opening things up.  
**10...exd5 11.♙e1+ ♙e6 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.♙xd5** The engine suggests 13.♘g5, but there's no need for that.  
**13...0-0 14.♙xe6 fxe6 15.♙e2**



White is just much better. Fabi somehow dug in his heels and held the game, but as for the whole opening, the question remains – why? I understand playing something offbeat to create winning chances, as in the game against Xiong. But the sequel was just a grind with no winning chances whatsoever. This is really surprising to me since normally Fabi's judgment is fantastic. But anyone can have bad days.

**Draw**

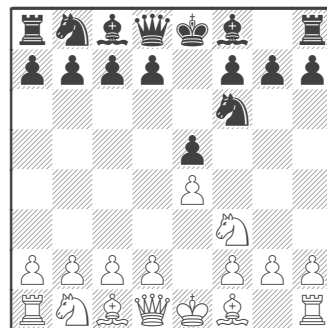
## C42

Ray Robson 2660

Fabiano Caruana 2804

Round 6, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

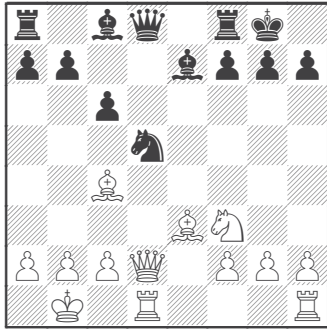
**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6!**



Why am I giving an exclamation to the second move? The best way to get your head back on after a rough patch is by playing what you know best. The Petroff is considered drawish sometimes, but Fabi has won notable games with it, such as those in the last rounds of the Candidates and Grenke.



3.♖xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♖xe4 5.♖c3 ♖xc3  
6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♖d2 ♗d7  
9.0-0-0 c6 10.♖b1 d5 11.c4 ♗b6  
12.cxd5 ♗xd5 13.♗c4

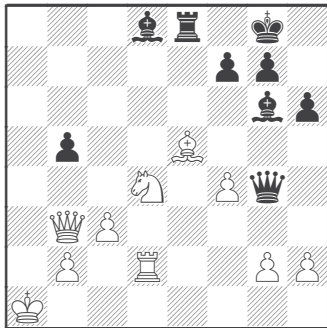


13...♗f5! Now THIS is preparation/  
risk-taking done right! I don't know if  
the text move was analyzed at home,  
but it's a pawn sacrifice that seems very  
natural to me. In return for the pawn  
Black gets the bishop pair, the open c-  
file, and free play.

14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♖xd5 ♖c8  
16.♗d4 ♗g6 It's very easy here for  
Black to just make moves. ...♗d8,  
...♗f6, etc. There's nothing immediately  
concrete, but Black can simply "play  
chess." The critical position came on  
move 27.

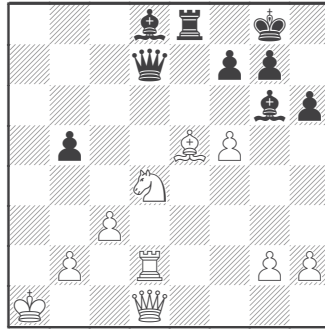
17.♖a1 ♖e8 18.♖he1 ♗f6 19.c3 ♖e5  
20.♖b3 a6 21.♗f4 ♖xe1 22.♖xe1  
♖d7 23.♗e5 ♖e8 24.f4 ♗d8 25.a4 h6  
26.♖d1 ♖g4 27.♖d2 b5!? Technically  
this is unsound, but I don't think it was  
bluff. Accepting the sacrifice is easy  
for engines but terrifying for humans.  
Again, this is sensible risk-taking,  
unlike the decisions in the Izoria and  
Shankland games.

28.axb5 axb5



29.♖d1? The engine just laughs here,  
but with avenues of attack on the first  
rank and a-file, and the lack of a light-

squared bishop in White's camp, it takes  
nerves of steel to play 29.♖xb5! f6  
30.♗d6.  
29...♖d7 30.f5

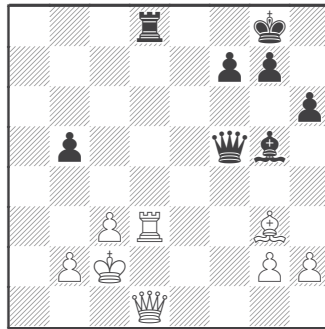


This was the idea, shutting out that  
powerful bishop, but Black has a worthy  
reply.

30...♗g5! The key move.

31.♖d3 ♗xf5 32.♗xf5 ♖xf5 This  
shows the idea of 30...♗g5. If the bishop  
was still on d8, it would be hanging.

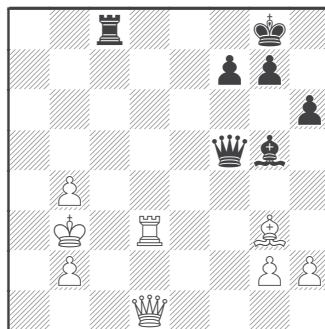
33.♗g3 ♖a8+ 34.♖b1 ♖d8 35.♖c2



35...b4! A fantastic finish.

36.cxb4 36.♖f3 b3+ and 36.b3 ♖a8 both  
win for Black.

36...♖c8+ 37.♖b3 If 37.♖b1 then  
37...♖c1+ wins.



37...♖e6+ 38.♖d5 ♖d8 39.♖c4 ♖c6+  
**White resigned**



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Fabi had found himself. He played very  
well for the remainder of the tournament  
and ended up gaining rating points  
for the event, but finished half a point  
behind Sam Shankland. This really puts  
the game against Izoria into perspective.  
If he had drawn it and all the other results  
were the same, he would have finished  
tied for the lead. However, let's not  
focus on "what-ifs". Instead, let's learn  
from the way Fabi rebounded against  
Ray, showing that he is a true champion.  
And remember to always keep risks  
under control.



# NO THRILLS NO SPILLS FOR SO-SO-SOLID WESLEY!

WHATEVER  
HAPPENED TO  
"THE BIG 3"?

**WESLEY  
SO**

WESLEY SO FINISHED THE US CHAMPIONSHIP IN CLEAR THIRD PLACE WITH 6½/11. HE STARTED WELL, WITH TWO CONSECUTIVE WINS, BUT THEN HE WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN!?

by **GM MICHAEL ROHDE**

**W**esley So had propelled himself to the top of world chess in late 2016 with victories in the Sinquefeld Cup and the London Chess Classic, by earning individual and team gold on board 3 for the US in the 2016 Olympiad, and then winning at Tata Steel in 2017. Then he won the 2017 US Championship.

During the roller-coaster year since then, So had cooled off a little and started drawing a much greater percentage of his games in the Grand Chess Tour series and other top events. He had a great run in the 2017 World Cup, making it to the semi-finals where, playing for a berth in the 2018 Candidates, he was eliminated by Diren Ling; however, he qualified into the Candidates anyway by virtue of his rating.

The Candidates Tournament itself finished only a couple of weeks before the 2018 US Championship started, and therefore became the dominant recent memory, especially with Caruana having become the World Championship Challenger. In the Candidates, Wesley had scored 6/14, having won only one game, and with an individual result against Caruana of ½/2. The 2018 US Championship would be the perfect place to start another hot streak.





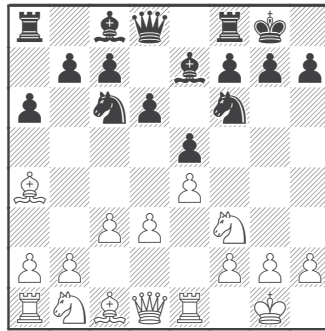
So got off to a great start in round 1, defeating Yaroslav Zhrebukh, who tried an anti-Sicilian with 3. ♖b5+ against him and later misplayed the middlegame. Then he faced Alexander Onischuk, whom he had last faced in the 2017 US Championship playoff after they had tied for first in regulation.

## C87

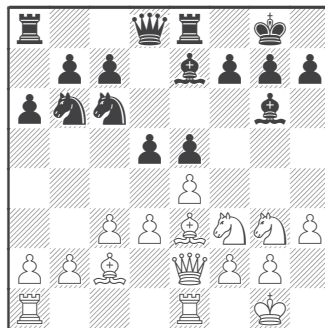
|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| Wesley So          | 2786 |
| Alexander Onischuk | 2672 |

Round 2, US Championship, St. Louis 2018

**1.e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♖c6 3. ♘b5 a6 4. ♘a4 ♖f6 5.0-0 ♘e7 6.d3** The move d2-d3 in the Ruy Lopez is undergoing a giant revival in almost all the different move orders.  
**6...d6 7.c3 0-0 8. ♖e1**



**8...♘g4** The conventional wisdom about ...♘g4 in the Closed Ruy Lopez is that it is effective when Black is actually putting pressure on d4 (i.e. when White has placed the pawn on d4) but not when White is building up his game without central tension, because then White can play h2-h3, and maneuver the b1 knight to g3 without having to worry about the center. Onischuk goes against this because of his idea of supplanting this development with ...♖f6-d7-b6 and ...d6-d5. However, I don't like it.  
**9. ♖bd2 ♖d7 10.h3 ♘h5 11. ♘c2 ♖b6 12. ♖f1 d5 13. ♖g3 13.exd5 ♖xd5 14. ♖e3 ♖d8** is possible, but So prefers to ignore Black's central demonstration.  
**13...♘g6 14. ♖e2 ♖e8 15. ♘e3**



**15...♖d6** Although in this structure there is no maneuver involving ♖f3-h4-f5, the caged bishop on g6 still makes a bad



**Grandmaster Michael Rohde**, a Brilliancy Prize winner at the 1986, 1987 and 1988 US Championships, US Open Champ in 1991 (and equal first in 2007), wrote a popular "Game of the Month" column in *Chess Life* from 1991-2001 and is author of *Play the Sveshnikov* and *The Great Evans Gambit Debate*.

impression. Perhaps Black should play **15...d4 16. ♘d2 (16.cxd4 ♖xd4 17. ♖xd4 exd4 18. ♘d2 c5) 16...♖d7 17.cxd4 ♖xd4 18. ♖xd4 exd4** but White's potential ♘c2-b3 should confer a strategic edge (In this line **18...♖xd4 19. ♘c3 ♖d6 20. ♘b3** is also pleasant for White.).  
**16. ♘xb6 cxb6 17.h4 h6 18. ♘b3**

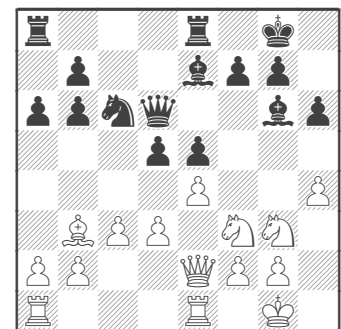
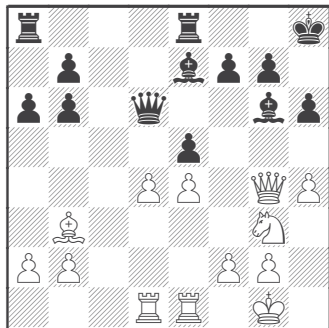


Photo by Lennart Oates

White's light-square control is now generating a clear advantage.

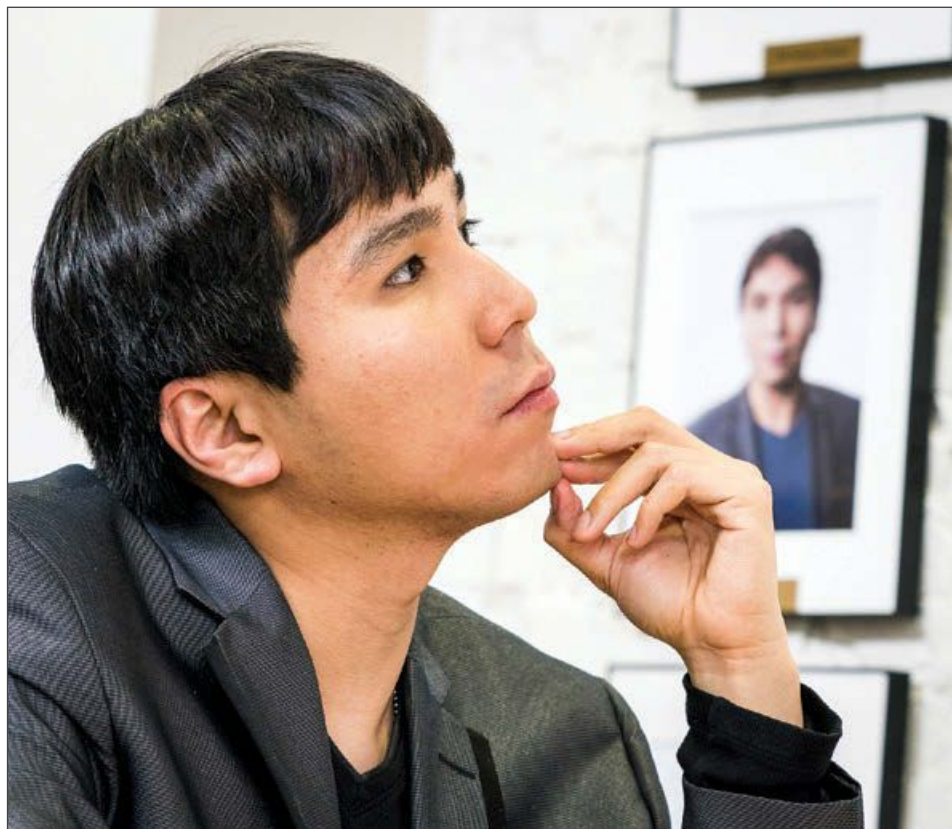
18...d4 19.cxd4 ♖xd4 20.♖xd4 ♗xd4 21.♗g4 ♗d6 22.d4 ♖h8 22... exd4 23.e5 ♗c6 24.e6 with h4-h5 on the way is destruction.  
23.♗ad1



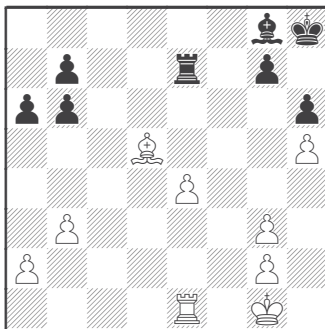
23...♗f6 23...♗f8 seems the most resilient.

24.h5 ♗h7 25.dxe5 ♗xe5 26.♗xf7 ♗f8 27.♗e6 ♗f6 28.♗xe5 ♗xe5 29.♗d7 ♗ad8 30.♗xd8 ♗xd8 31.b3 ♗d7 32.♗e6

▶ Wesley So,  
US Championship, St. Louis 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



♗e7 33.♗d5 ♗xg3 34.fxg3 ♗g8



35.♖f2 ♗e6 36.♗xe6 ♗xe6 37.♖e3 ♖g8 38.♗f1 g6 39.hxg6 ♗xg6 40.♗f3 ♖g7 41.e5 ♗g4 42.♖d3 b5 43.e6 ♗g6 44.e7 ♗d6+ 45.♖e2

Black resigned

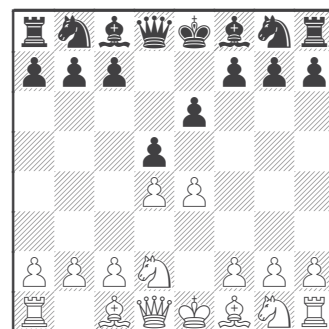
After two rounds, So was tied for the lead with Varuzhan Akobian. Then came three highly texturized games, all showing his tactical accuracy and comfort level with making small sacrifices for positional pluses. These games are good examples showing why it is extremely difficult to outplay Wesley So.

## CO3

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Awonder Liang | 2552 |
| Wesley So     | 2786 |

Round 3, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♖d2

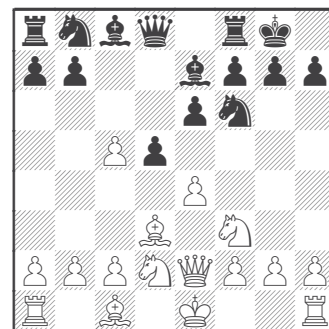


3...♗e7 The original point of this semi-waiting move is that in the line 3...♖f6 4.e5 ♖d7 5.♗d3, White often arranges his knights with ♖g1-e2 and ♖d2-f3 to doubly defend d4. But after the move played, if 4.♖gf3 there follows 4...♖f6 and that plan is not happening.

4.♗d3 c5 5.dxc5 ♖f6 5...♖d7 is an old line which can run something like 6.b4 a5 7.♗b2 ♗f6 8.♗xf6 ♗xf6 9.♖gf3 axb4 10.exd5 exd5 11.0-0 ♖xc5 12.♗b5+.

6.♗e2 0-0 6...♖c6 7.♖gf3 ♖b4, to chase White's bishop, is not good after 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.0-0 and the black knight is traveling too far afield.

7.♖gf3



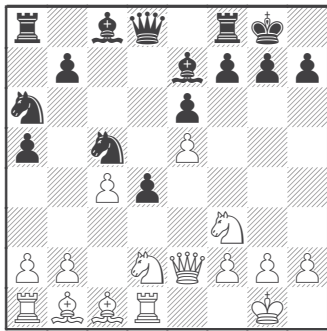
7...a5 A maneuver that has energized this line. Black wants to take on c5 with a knight. And in almost any resulting position where White's light-squared bishop is exchanged, it is very difficult for

White to achieve anything.

**8.0-0 ♖a6 9.e5** The only chance for an advantage. 9.♙xa6 ♜xa6 will leave White with nothing after Black recovers the pawn on c5. 9.exd5 exd5 likewise gives Black too much activity.

**9...♘d7 10.c4** The light-squared bishop must be preserved, no matter how awkwardly. 10.c3 ♘axc5 11.♙c2 b6 12.♙e1 ♙a6 13.♙e3 is possible.

**10...♘dxc5 11.♙b1 d4 12.♙d1**

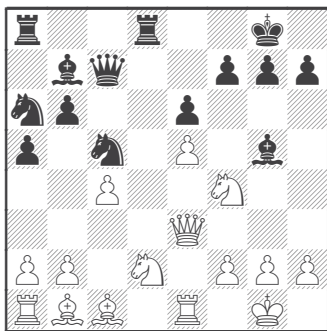


**12...d3** Forced, because 13 ♘e4 is strong against almost anything else. For example, 12...♘b4 13 ♘e4 d3 14 ♙e3. But with 12...d3, Black is making a positional pawn sacrifice for squares and activity.

**13.♙e3 b6 14.♘e1** Liang consistently refuses to subject his light-squared bishop to exchange.

**14...♙b7 15.♘d3 ♙c7 16.♘f4** Gingerly stepping out of what is to become a d-file pin.

**16...♙fd8 17.♙e1 ♙g5**



**18.♘f1** Embarking on a new process of extrication.

**18...♘b4 19.♙g3 ♙xf4 20.♙xf4 ♘bd3 21.♙e3 21...♙h6 f5** creates more problems for White.

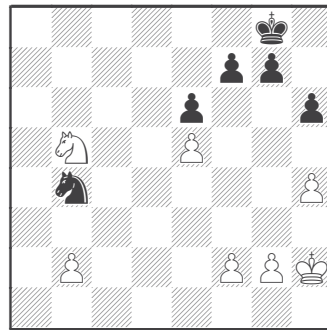
**21...♘e4 22.♙h4 ♙xc4 23.♙g5** Black has finally recovered the pawn but White suddenly has some tactics based on the lateral pin.

**23...♙d4 24.♙xd3 ♘xg5** After 24...♙xd3 25.f3 then 25...h6 is the only move, but one that is probably sufficient for equality.

**25.♙xc4 ♙xh4 26.♙e2 ♙c8 27.♙b3 ♙e4 27...♙b4** is a better defense.

**28.♘e3 ♙b4 29.♙xb4 axb4 30.♙d1 h6 31.h4 31.f3** would give White a good advantage, sidelining the black knight.

**31...♘e4 32.♙f3 ♘c5 33.♙xb7 ♘xb7 34.♙d4 b3 35.axb3 ♘a5 36.b4 ♙c1+ 37.♘h2 ♘c6 38.♙c4 ♙xc4 39.♘xc4 b5 40.♘d6 ♘xb4 41.♘xb5**



**41...♘d3** Securing material equality.

**42.♘g3 ♘xb2 43.f4 h5 44.♘d6 ♘f8 45.♘f3 ♘d3 46.♘e4 ♘f2+ 47.♘f3 ♘g4 48.♘e4 ♘h6 49.f5 ♘e7 50.♘f4 ♘g4 51.fxe6 ♘xe6 52.♘f5 g6 53.♘d4+ ♘d5 54.♘f3 ♘f2 55.♘g5 ♘e6 56.♘f4 ♘d5 57.♘g5 ♘e6**

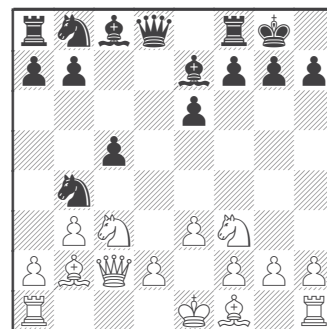
**Draw**

## A13

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Wesley So           | 2786 |
| Aleksandr Lenderman | 2599 |

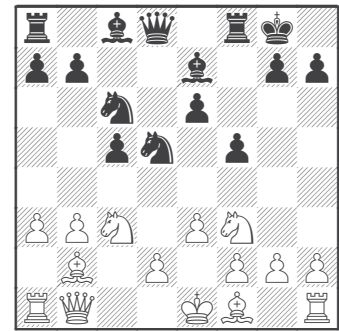
Round 4, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

**1.♘f3 d5 2.e3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.b3 ♙e7 5.♙b2 0-0 6.♘c3 c5 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♙c2 ♘b4**



**9.♙e4 9.♙b1 b6 10.a3 ♘d5 11.♘xd5 exd5 12.d4 ♘c6 13.♙b5 ♘d7 14.0-0 ♘xd4 (14...a6 was better) 15.♘xd4 cxd4 16.♙xd7 ♙xd7 17.♙xd4** with a small but permanent edge for White was played in Hou Yifan 2654 - M. Bluebaum 2631, Karlsruhe/Baden Baden 2018.

**9...f5 10.♙b1 ♘8c6 11.a3 ♘d5**

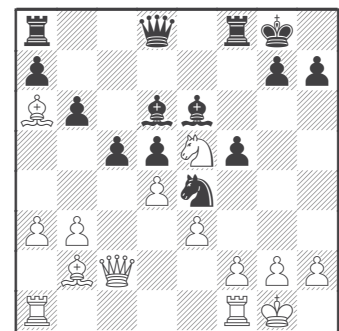


**12.♙c2** A noticeably quiet move, repositioning the queen. If 12 ♙b5 ♘d7 13 0-0, then 13...a6, when 14 ♙c4 is met by 14...♘b6 15 ♙e2 e5. White is in effect waiting to see to which square the f1-bishop should be developed.

**12...b6 13.♘xd5 exd5 14.d4 ♙e6 15.♙b5 ♘a5 16.♙c3** The knight's influence on the c4 square is irritating, so it is chased away, but Lenderman has other good plans.

**16...♘b7 17.0-0 ♘d6 18.♙a6 ♘e4 19.♘e5 ♙d6** More flexible than 19...♘xc3 20.♙xc3 ♙d6 21.f4 which would nullify the two bishops anyway.

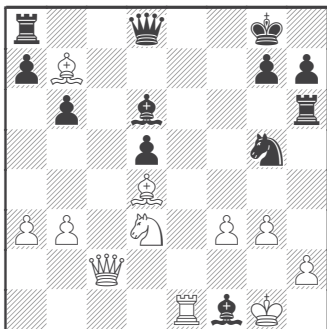
**20.♙b2**



**20...f4** Now the position becomes very sharp. But there really was no choice, otherwise White has the edge after f2-f3. **21.f3 ♘g5 22.exf4 ♙xf4 23.♙ae1 cxd4 24.♘d3 24.♙c1 ♙h4 (24...♙f5 25.♘c6) 25.g3 ♙h5** looks fine for Black, trying to nudge the white knight off its e5 perch.



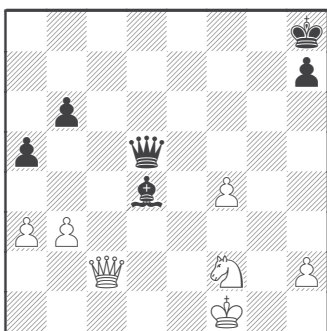
24...♖h4 25.g3 ♖h6 26.♙xd4 ♙h3  
27.♙b7 If 27.♖f2 ♙f5 and Black's  
initiative starts to mushroom.  
27...♙xf1



28.♙xf1 The subtle point of this  
finesse is that 28.♙xf1 ♖b8 29.♙xd5+  
♙h8 allows Black to work much more  
powerfully with ideas such as ...♙d6-  
c5, both because White has dark-square  
vulnerability and because the g5 knight  
still has checks available.

28...♖b8 Critical is 28...♙xg3, mostly to  
defend d5. Then 29.hxg3 ♙xf3 30.♖g2  
♙xe1 31.♙xd5+ ♙h8 32.♙xe1 leads to  
the bizarre material distribution of three  
minors vs. two rooks in a dangerous  
middlegame.

29.♙xd5+ ♙h8 30.f4 ♙c5 31.fxg5  
♙xd4 32.gxh6 ♖xd5 33.hxg7+ ♙xg7  
34.♙f2 ♖f8 35.♙e4 ♙d4 36.♖f4 ♖xf4  
37.gxf4 a5



38.a4 For the next few moves, White can  
consider the centralization ♖c2-e4.

38...b5 39.axb5 ♖xb5+ 40.♙g2  
♖d5+ 41.♙e4 h6 42.♙g3 ♖g8+  
43.♙f3 ♖d5 44.h3 ♖h5+ 45.♙g3  
♖g6+ 46.♙f3 ♖h5+

**Draw**

After the game against Lenderman,  
Wesley commented to Maurice Ashley  
that he has been drawing a lot of games

recently. Perhaps he was frustrated that  
the pawn-up ending did not lead to  
anything.

## E05

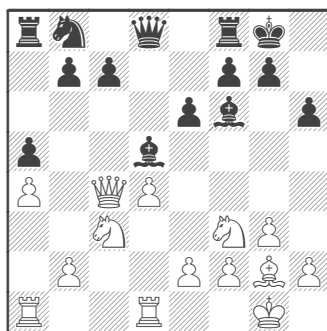
Jeffery Xiong 2665

Wesley So 2786

Round 5, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.g3 ♙e7  
5.♙g2 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 7.♖c2 a6  
8.a4 ♙d7 9.♖xc4 ♙d1 was played  
by Xiong against So in their celebrated  
game from the 2017 US Championship,  
continuing with 9...♙c6 10.♙c3 ♙xf3  
11.♙xf3 ♙c6.

9...♙c6 10.♙g5 h6 11.♙xf6 ♙xf6  
12.♙d1 a5 13.♙c3 ♙d5

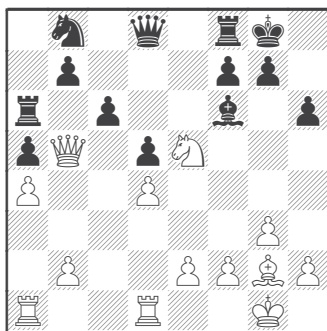


14.♖b5 14.♖d3 ♙a6 15.e4 ♙b4 16.♖e2  
♙c6 with the excellent knight on b4  
giving Black good enough chances.

14...♙a6 14...♙c6 is not as convenient  
here because after 15.♖b3 ♙d5 (15...♙a6  
16.d5) 16.♙xd5 ♖xd5 17.♙d2 Black  
has created unnecessary problems for  
himself..

15.♙xd5 exd5 16.♙e5 16.♖xb7 is at  
best an immediate draw after 16...♖b6  
17.♖a8 ♙a6.

16...c6



17.♖xb7 Looking to force the draw  
now, otherwise Black's structure is just  
too solid.

17...♖b6 18.♖a7 ♙e7 19.♙d3  
19.♖xa5 ♙b4 and Black also has a  
perpetual attack.  
19...♙a6 20.♖b7 ♖b6 21.♖a7 ♙a6  
22.♖b7 ♖b6

**Draw**

After 5 rounds, Wesley still had a great score  
of 3½, tied for the lead with Shankland and  
Akopian, while Caruana was a half-point  
behind with 3. It would turn out that his  
best chance to power into the lead would  
come in the very next round.

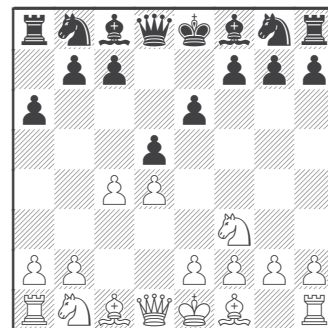
## D30

Wesley So 2786

Zviad Izoria 2599

Round 6, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

1.♙f3 d5 2.d4 e6 3.c4 a6



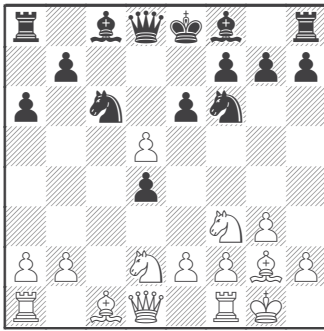
An interesting move that works well  
as an antidote to So's favorite Catalan.  
The inclusion of ...a7-a6 assists Black  
in threatening to take the c4 pawn,  
and if White exchanges on d5 instead,  
then White's light-square fianchetto is  
ineffective if Black can still blunt the  
diagonal with ...c7-c6.

4.♙bd2 Keeping the tension on c4  
enables White to set up the Catalan  
formation. 4.♙g5 is also logical, to  
get both bishops into the game with a  
subsequent e2-e3.

4...♙f6 5.g3 c5 A good reaction to  
White's placement of his knight on d2.

6.♙g2 ♙c6 7.0-0 cxd4 7...♙e7 8.cxd5  
exd5 9.b3 is also reasonably pleasant  
for White.

8.cxd5

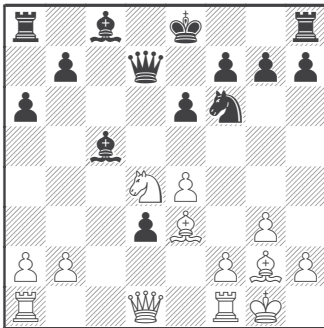


**8...xd5** Forcing the issue in an energetic bid for equality. 8...xd5 9.b3 e7 (9...e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.xxd4) 10.fxd4 gives White a pull. **9.d3** The only consistent move. Otherwise, 8...xd5 has merely made White's pending fxd4 even stronger.

**10.e4** 10.exd3 d8 11.d4 was also to be considered; although White lacks pressure on d5, Black's development is lagging.

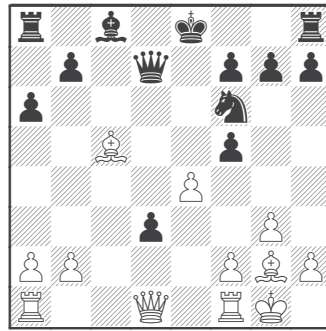
**10...b5** Playing to make a nuisance of the d3 pawn, while also watching out for e4-e5. Definitely not 10...xe4 11.g5 f5 12.dxe4 fxe4 13.e1.

**11.dbd4 dxd4 12.dxd4 d7 13.e3 e5**

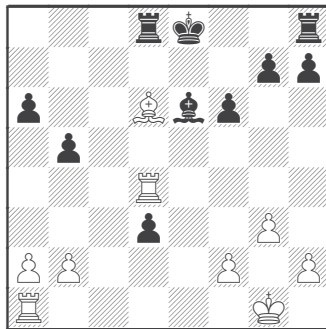


**14.f5** 14.dxe6 is the move that So must have tried very hard to make work here. 14...xe3 15.dg7+ f8 16.e5 g5 is a surprising resource (Trying to hold the extra piece with 16...dg8 is too dangerous after 17.e6) 17.exf6 d4 tries to stall White's mobilization through ...c8-g4, but 18.h4 (18.dh5 g4 19.f3 xh5 may be about even here.) gets around this neatly; then 18...xf6 19.dh5 g4 20.d2 and White still has the more comfortable position.

**14...exf5 15.xc5**



**15...xe4** This move generates equality. **16.e1 d5 17.a4+ 17.a3 e6** and White's attack is insufficient. **17...b5 18.xe4 fxe4 19.xe4+ xe4 20.xe4+ e6 21.d4 d8 22.d6 f6**



The position resolves quite definitely into an opposite-colored bishop situation with no winning chances for either side. **23.xd3 f7 24.d2 d7 25.b4 xd2 26.xd2 d8 27.c3 g4 28.e1 d1 29.xd1 xd1 30.f4 e6**

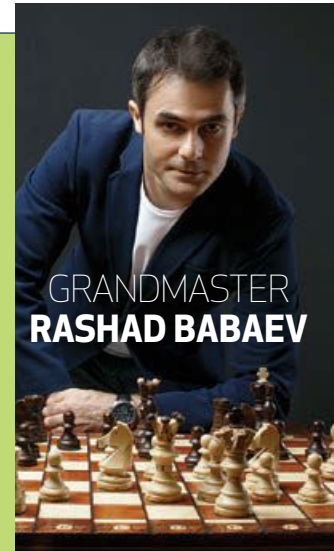
**Draw**

## THE HOME STRETCH

In rounds 7 through 10, So had few opportunities to press for more than half a point each. While Shankland and Caruana would each set a blistering pace in the latter half of the event, each of them played quietly against So.

In round 7, Shankland essayed a very quiet line against So's Gruenfeld. And in round 8, which started with So in third place, a half-point behind Shankland and Caruana, but a point ahead of the nearest other competitors, So got nothing against Caruana's Petroff's Defense.

This pattern continued in rounds 9 and 10, during which So had two Blacks



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in a row, with Akobian and Robson each choosing relatively quiet lines as White. By the time So faced off in a much-anticipated matchup against Nakamura in round 11, there was no way to change the ultimate standings.

So finished in clear third place in the 2018 US Championship with 6½/11. And along with Shankland, Wesley was one of only two players who remained undefeated throughout the event.



ONE THING GOING AGAINST NAKAMURA WAS ROUNDS 9 AND 11 - HAVING TO PLAY WITH THE BLACK PIECES AGAINST FABIANO CARUANA AND WESLEY SO, RESPECTIVELY. IT DOESN'T GET TOUGHER THAN THAT. WHAT THIS TELLS US IS THAT HIKARU NEEDED TO SCORE EARLY.

WHATEVER  
HAPPENED TO  
"THE BIG 3"?

**HIKARU  
NAKAMURA**

# Slow Start, Missed Opportunities

BY GM JOHN FEDOROWICZ

**E**ver since Wesley So arrived in the United States he has been grouped with Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura to make up the so called "Big Three". All members of this trio are in the world top ten and potential contenders for the world title – in fact Fabiano already is! They can boast of a number of US Championships and an impressive Olympiad win, before even mentioning all their individual tournament victories. So here I'm going to try and understand what went wrong with Nakamura's tournament.

Analysis of a player's performance should always begin with the colors and opponents. Here we look at Hikaru Nakamura's round by round schedule and try to figure out his approach and outlook on the tournament as a whole.

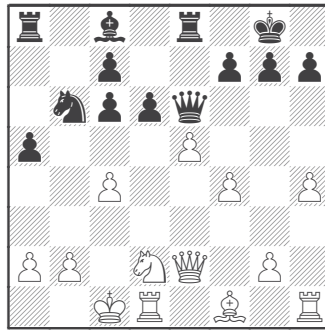
In an all-play-all (round robin) with an odd number of players, the first important moment comes with the drawing of lots to determine the matchups. This was a success for Nakamura who must have picked number 1 to start off with two Whites. It's important to choose from the top half (here from 1 to 6)

to get the extra White. In strong events this is a big deal. One thing going against Nakamura was rounds 9 and 11 – having to play with the black pieces against world title challenger Fabiano Caruana and Wesley So, respectively. It doesn't get tougher than that. What this tells us is that Hikaru needed to score early. My good friend GM Larry Christiansen once told me that preparing for a game in the US Championship was the toughest thing about the tournament. I have to agree.

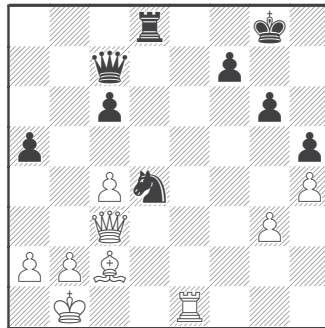


When I saw this pawn push during the game I didn't have a clue as to what it was all about – perhaps  $\text{g5}$  type stuff or even rook lifts with  $\text{h3}$ .

**8...a5!** Robson was ready for this and played Black's best statistical reply  $8...\text{b7}!?$ . Then followed  $9.\text{c4}$   $\text{b6}$   $10.\text{h3}$   $\text{e6}$   $11.\text{f4}$   $0-0-0$   $12.\text{a4}$   $\text{d5}$  This leads to a sacrifice of a rook for two pieces and level play. H.Nakamura 2781 – M.Carlsen 2837, London Classic 2017. **9.c4**  $\text{b6}$  **10.**  $\text{d2}$   $\text{e6}$  **11.**  $\text{f3}$   $\text{b4}+$  **12.**  $\text{d2}$   $\text{xd2}+$  **13.**  $\text{xd2}$   $0-0$  **14.**  $0-0$   $\text{e8}!$  **15.**  $\text{f4}$   $\text{d6}$



**16.**  $\text{h3}$  There's the rook lift!  
**16...**  $\text{h6}$  **17.**  $\text{e3}$   $\text{xf4}$  **18.**  $\text{e4}$   $\text{g3}$  **19.**  $\text{exd6}$   $\text{e6}$  **20.**  $\text{dxc7}$   $\text{xc7}$  **21.**  $\text{f3}$   $\text{d7}$  **22.**  $\text{g5}$   $\text{f8}$  **23.**  $\text{f2}$   $\text{ad8}$  **24.**  $\text{d3}$   $\text{h6}$  **25.**  $\text{xe6}$   $\text{xe6}$  **26.**  $\text{f3}$   $\text{ed6}$  **27.**  $\text{ee1}$   $\text{d4}$  **28.**  $\text{g3}$   $\text{e6}$  **29.**  $\text{b1}$   $\text{h5}$  **30.**  $\text{c2}$   $\text{exd1}+$  **31.**  $\text{xd1}$   $\text{g6}$  **32.**  $\text{c2}$   $\text{d4}$  **33.**  $\text{c3}$



Black might be slightly better here but White's position is solid. Here Black got a comfortable game early on and White had zero chances to make any winning attempts.

**Draw**

The next round saw Hikaru make another draw with the white pieces, this time against Yaroslav Zherebukh,

where Black went for the super-solid Petroff Defense. He did try the sharpest attempt  $3.\text{d4}$ , but Black kept control until a draw was agreed. So, with two rounds gone and two Whites as well, this was a disappointing start for sure, but in a tournament like this patience is required...

## C43

Hikaru Nakamura 2787

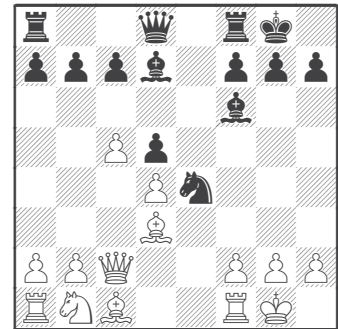
Yaroslav Zherebukh 2640

Round 2, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

**1.e4 e5 2.**  $\text{f3}$   $\text{f6}!$ ? The Petroff Defense is Black's most solid reply to  $1.\text{e4}$ .

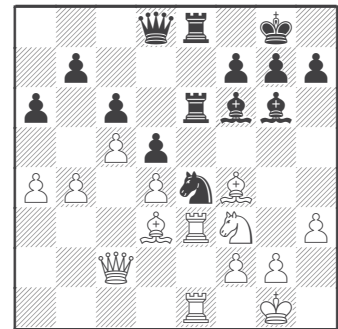
**3.d4!?** White's most aggressive choice against this tough nut.

**3...**  $\text{xe4}$  **4.**  $\text{d3}$   $\text{d5}$  **5.**  $\text{xe5}$   $\text{d7}$  **6.**  $\text{xd7}$   $\text{xd7}$  **7.**  $0-0$   $\text{d6}$  **8.**  $\text{c4}$   $0-0!?$  **9.**  $\text{c5}$   $\text{e7}$  **10.**  $\text{c2}$   $\text{f6}$



**11.**  $\text{e3}$  **11.**  $\text{xe4}?$   $\text{dx4}$  **12.**  $\text{xe4}$  is met by  $12...\text{c6}$  when Black regains the pawn with the bishop pair and the better game.

**11...**  $\text{e8}$  **12.**  $\text{d2}$   $\text{f5}$  **13.**  $\text{f3}$   $\text{g6}$  **14.**  $\text{fe1}$   $\text{e6}$  **15.**  $\text{f4}$   $\text{e7}$  **16.**  $\text{e3}$   $\text{e8}$  **17.**  $\text{ae1}$   $\text{c6}$  **18.**  $\text{h3}$   $\text{d8}$  **19.**  $\text{b4}$   $\text{a6}$  **20.**  $\text{a4}$



**20...**  $\text{g5}!$  A fine move that initiates many exchanges and achieves the desired draw.

Hikaru's tournament started off with a fairly uneventful draw against Ray Robson in a Scotch Game. White tried  $8.\text{h4}!$ ? but Black shrugged off with solid play.

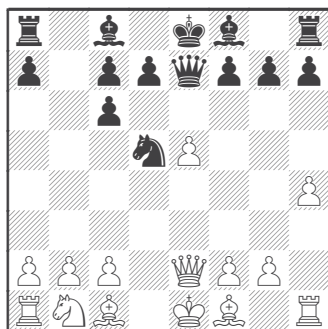
## C45

Hikaru Nakamura 2787

Ray Robson 2660

Round 1, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

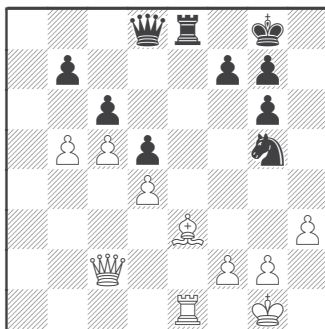
**1.e4 e5 2.**  $\text{f3}$   $\text{c6}$  **3.**  $\text{d4}$   $\text{exd4}$  **4.**  $\text{xd4}$   $\text{f6}$  **5.**  $\text{dxc6}$   $\text{bxc6}$  **6.**  $\text{e5}$   $\text{e7}$  **7.**  $\text{e2}$   $\text{d5}$  **8.**  $\text{h4}!$ ?





**GM John Fedorowicz**, "The Fed," elected to the Chess Hall of Fame in 2009, earned his international grandmaster title in 1986. He played in 21 U.S. championships and was a two-time U.S. Olympic Team member and captain. He five times tied for first at the World Open and was a 1980 U.S. Open co-champion. In his teens, he won two US Junior Invitationals and the 1975 National High School Championship.

21.♖xg5 ♖xg5 22.♗xg6 hxg6 23.b5 ♜xe3 24.♗xe3 axb5 25.axb5



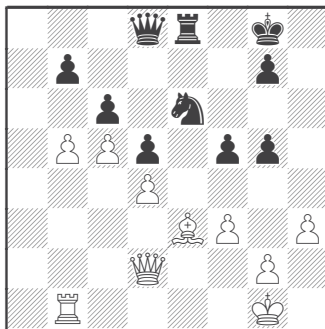
25...♗e6 After 25...cxb5?? 26.♞b3! White regains the pawn with pressure on b7 and d5.

26.♞b1 f5 Intending ...f5-f4.

27.♞d2 Stopping ...f5-f4.

27...g5 Again intending ...f5-f4.

28.f3



Giving the bishop an escape square.

28...g4 29.bxc6 bxc6 30.fxg4 fxg4 31.hxg4 ♜h4 32.♞d1 ♜h7 33.♞b3 And with not a lot going on, a draw was agreed.

**Draw**

With no wins from two Whites, how does Hikaru now approach his first game with Black? I think it is too early to go crazy. Alexander Onischuk hardly ever loses with the white pieces, so Nakamura attempted to mix it up with an irregular Modern Defense. I thought Alex played the opening well and it seemed Hikaru was about to fall into difficulties but he found an ...h5-h4 idea that offered good counterplay.

Round four saw Hikaru once again playing White, this time adopting the King's Indian Attack against Awonder Liang. I liked his choice of opening and expected Black to have a hard time. In fact it did seem that White was building up a kingside initiative, but Awonder defended well.

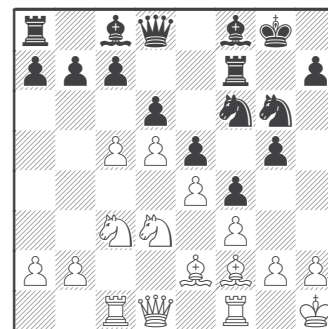
Then, Nakamura tried playing the King's Indian against Alexandr Lenderman. A typically sharp opening then led to lively play, but both players knew their stuff with neither ever gaining a clear edge.

## E98

|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| Alexandr Lenderman | 2599 |
| Hikaru Nakamura    | 2787 |

Round 5, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

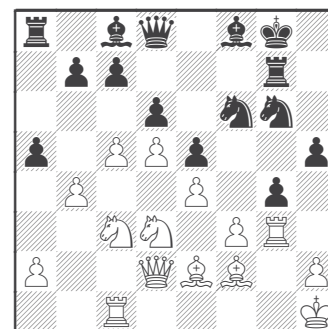
1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♖c6 8.d5 ♖e7 9.♗e1 ♗d7 10.♗e3 Alexandr Lenderman is one of the world's leading experts on this variation, which was once the favorite of Viktor Korchnoi.  
10...f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 g5 13.♗d3 ♖f6 14.c5 ♗g6 15.♞c1 ♞f7 16.♗h1 ♗f8



17.♞g1!? If White succeeds in locking the kingside then he has a free run on the other flank. I thought with this move he was already envisaging a lockdown of the kingside with a timely g2-g4.

17...♞g7 18.b4 h5 19.♞d2 g4 20.g3!? But this is another idea behind ♞g1, which enables White to construct a defense of the kingside.

20...fxg3 21.♞xg3 a5





Alexandr Lenderman,  
US Championship, St. Louis 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

**40...c5! 41.bxc5** And now follows 41...xc5 followed by ...xc6 when the f6 pawn falls. In the game Black reached a safe position, but White never felt threatened. Sometimes in this variation Black gets a nice sacrificial attack going, but here Alexandr made sure that never happened.

**Draw**

Playing the white pieces against Jeffery Xiong, Hikaru tried a rather insipid variation of the Vienna which allowed easy equalization, although I didn't understand ...g4 provoking h2-h3 and only then ...e6. Also why did Jeffery

head for a messy line with ...e5-e4 when instead ...ab8 would have simply kept the balance. A few moves later Hikaru could have obtained a huge advantage by 19 d4! leaving him with a two pieces vs. a rook position – but he overlooked this opportunity.

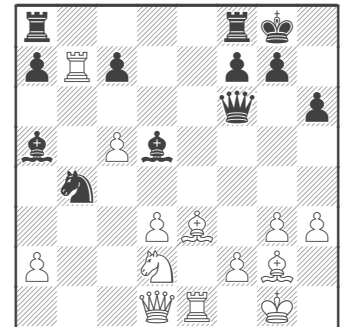
## C26

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Hikaru Nakamura | 2787 |
| Jeffery Xiong   | 2665 |

Round 6, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018

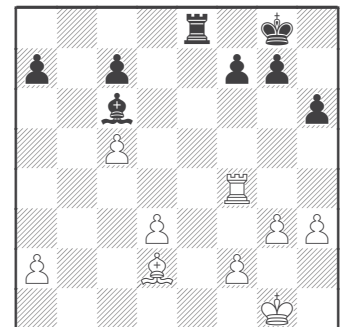
**1.e4 e5 2.d3** Nakamura decides to try a variation of the Vienna.  
**2...d6 3.g3 d5 4.exd5 dxd5 5.g2 dxc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.d3 d6 8.0-0 9.Re1 Rf6 10.d3 h6**

**11.Bb1 Bb6 12.e3 g4 13.h3 e6 14.c4 e4 15.d2 exd3 16.c5 a5 17.Bxb7 d4 18.cxd3 d5**



**19.Bxb4?!** White misses a real chance here with the forcing continuation **19.d4! Bxb7 20.Bxb7 dxd3 21.dxa5 dxe1 22.Bxa8 Bxa8 23.Wxe1** and the two pieces can make Black's life miserable.

**19...Bxg2 20.Bf4 Bc6 21.Wa4 Bxd2 22.Bxd2 Bfe8 23.Bxe8+ Bxe8 24.Wxc6 Bxc6**



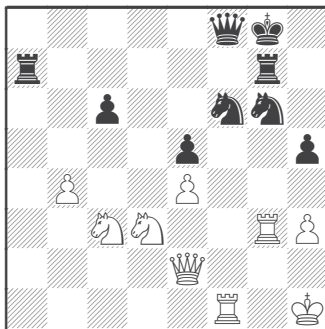
We have entered a typically drawn bishops of opposite color ending.

**25.f1 Bb8 26.Bb4 Bxb4 27.Bxb4 d7 28.h4 f6 29.d4 e6 30.a3 g5 31.e1** Black's a7 and c7 pawns and light-squared bishop create a fortress type situation

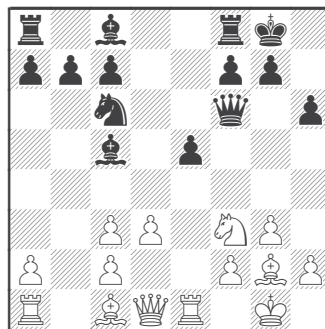
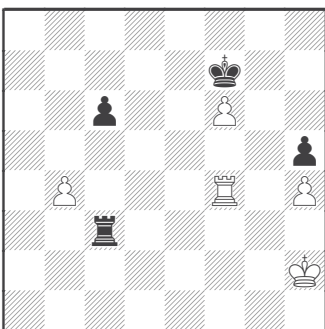
**Draw**

Round seven saw frustration getting to Nakamura in his game against Zviad Izoria. Trying to mix it up with Black against a strong player is like playing with fire. Black became slightly to medium worse early on and hung tough, but his unfortunate knight on g8 was a problem from which he could not fully recover. Black weakened his own queenside whereupon White eventually won a pawn and the game. And so, after 7 rounds and

**22.a3 axb4 23.axb4 c6 24.dxc6 bxc6 25.cxd6 Wxd6 26.e5 Wd8 27.Bxf8 Wxf8 28.fxg4 Bxg4 29.h3 Bxe2 30.Wxe2 Baa7 31.Bf1**



**31...d4 32.Bxg7+ Bxg7 33.dxf4 exf4 34.Wc4+ Wf7 35.Wxf7+ Wxf7 36.Bxf4 Bg3 37.dh2 Bxc3 38.e5 e6 39.exf6 Wf7 40.h4**







Fabiano Caruana vs. Hikaru Nakamura, US Championship, St. Louis 2018.

Photo by Lennart Ootes.

a 3-4 score, it was clear that Hikaru was off form and out of contention.  
[See the game on page 24. -Ed.]

The eighth round saw Hikaru try the “Larsen Opening” (named after Danish GM Bent Larsen) against the eventual champion Sam Shankland. Black played the opening well and emerged with an edge. Then Hikaru’s king came under attack from Sam’s heavy pieces, but he went into a defensive shell and hung on for dear life. It seemed there was never a death blow and in the end the game petered out to equality.

With Hikaru out of contention, round nine saw one of the most eagerly awaited games of the event – Nakamura vs. Caruana. Whenever these two top players play, it’s always a grudge match and this game was no different. The game had the feel of an Exchange Ruy Lopez with White looking slightly better, until  $\text{d}3$  handed over all the play to Black in a locked position. The d3 pawn was a convenient target and Black piled up on it while White defended. Nakamura had all the pressure and finally broke through, but it seems he missed wins

on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> moves by not playing  $\dots\text{e}4!$ . After this Fabiano salvaged a draw – for which I’m sure he was most grateful.

## C65

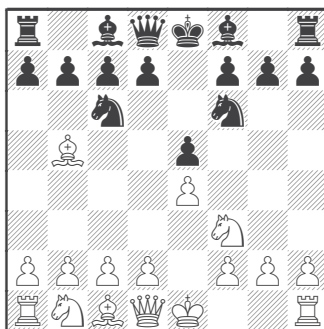
Fabiano Caruana 2804

Hikaru Nakamura 2787

Round 9, US Championship, St. Louis 2018

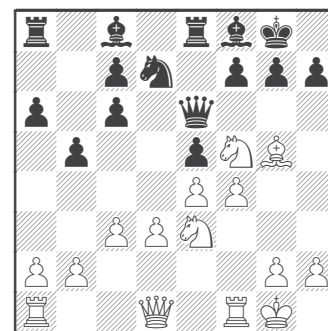
**1.e4 e5 2.d3 c6 3.f3** At GM level the Ruy Lopez is the most popular reply to 1.e4 e5.

**3...f6**



**4.d3** Played to avoid 4.0-0  $\text{d}4$  5.d4  $\text{d}6$  6. $\text{e}3$   $\text{c}6$  7.dxe5  $\text{d}5$  8. $\text{e}3$   $\text{d}8$  – the starting position for the extremely solid “Berlin Defense”.

**4...c5 5.c3 0-0 6.0-0 e8 7.dbd2 a6 8.e3c6 dxc6 9.dxc4 d6 10.g5 b5 11.d3 e7 12.h4 e6 13.hf5 f8 14.f4 d7**

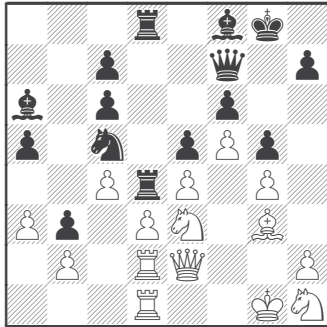


**15.dg3** I expected 15.fxe5!? which clears the center and leaves White with the better pawn structure.

**15...f6!** Now the position becomes locked and this leads to a lot of deep maneuvering.

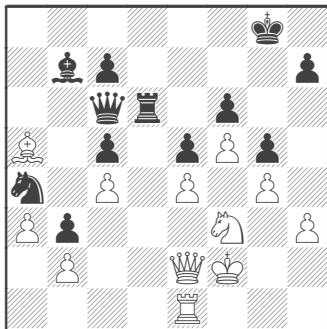
**16.f5 f7 17.h4 b7 18.e2 ad8 19.dh1 c5 20.f1d1 d6 21.d2 ed8 22.d2 a5 23.g4 g5! 24.g3**

♙a6 25.♙ad1 b4 26.c4 b3 27.a3 ♜d6 28.♙e1 ♘b7 29.♘h1 ♘c5 30.♙e2 ♜d4



Black is a little better now, but White is playing defense.

31.♙e1 ♜d6 32.♘f2 ♙d7 33.♙g2 ♙d8 34.h3 ♜d7 35.♘f1 ♙a4 36.♘h2 ♙c5 37.♘f3 ♜d6 38.♙c1 ♙xf2 39.♙xf2 c5 40.♙e2 ♜xd3 41.♜xd3 ♜xd3 42.♙xa5 ♙b7 43.♙f2 ♙d7 44.♙e1 ♜d6 45.♙c1 ♙c6 46.♙e1



46...♜d8 46...♙xe4! 47.♙xe4 ♙xe4 48.♙xe4 ♘xb2 should be winning for Black. The b-pawn will win back some material, e.g. 49.♙e2 ♘xc4! 50.♙xc4 b2. The only chance lay in 50.♙c3 when 50...b2 51.♙xb2 ♘xb2, leaves Black with two extra pawns – but they're not pretty! 47.h4 h6? Correct is 47...♙xe4 as on move 46. 48.hxg5 hxg5 49.♙g3 ♜d7 50.♙h2 ♜h7 51.♙d2 ♜d7 52.♙h2 ♜h7 53.♙d2

This draw must have come as an incredible relief to Fabiano.

**Draw**

Nakamura played White for the last time in round ten vs. Varuzhan Akobian. Though he had no chance to win the tournament, he won a very nice game to salvage a 5-5 score with one round to go.

The GM from Los Angeles is a lifelong adherent of the French Defense with which he has had great results, and in this game he decided to try his luck with 5...♙a5 in the Winawer variation, instead of the more usual 5...♙xc3.

The final round saw the last matchup involving “the Big Three” with Hikaru facing Wesley So – an encounter against a dangerous and familiar opponent. Maybe Nakamura’s ninth round success had invigorated him because his chess suddenly looked crisper. Against Wesley’s 1.d4 he tried the steady Nimzo-Indian but both players seemed peacefully inclined and trotted down a line that fizzled out to a drawn position. At the end Black’s king was a bit drafty, but White was unable to do anything to exploit it.

The big question is: Where did Hikaru Nakamura’s tournament go wrong and why?

The first thing that comes to mind is his slow start. Draws in rounds one and two with the white pieces affected the rest of his tournament in that it left him under pressure to win with Black. If Nakamura had been, say, on plus 1, I doubt whether he would have played the openings he did against both Onischuk and Izoria.

From my experience another factor to consider is matchups. Sometimes we don’t get the positions we had hoped for out of the openings. At this level it’s not easy to beat the other guy with your bare hands. In his only loss Nakamura defended well, but misjudged the pawn structure on the queenside.

The next thing to bear in mind is missed opportunities. There were only two games where Hikaru by-passed winning chances: 19 ♘c4 vs. Xiong and 46...♙e4 and 47...♙e4 vs. Caruana. His other games were always hovering around equal. It would not be a stretch to say he got a little lucky against Shankland and at the end he was slightly worse against Robson, but other than that he was in no danger.

If Hikaru had won against Xiong, how would that have changed the tournament? Sitting on +1 might have made a big difference in a couple of instances. I believe he would have opened with something more solid in his next game with Izoria and also adopted

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a different approach against Shankland. It’s amazing what just one win can do!

To conclude, Nakamura wasn’t reaching the right kind of positions out of the openings, but he still wasn’t that far off from being a contender. I believe a lot of what happened all comes down to GM Christiansen’s observation about preparation which we mentioned at the start of this article.



15-YEAR-OLD ANNIE WANG SHOWED SENSATIONAL MATURITY IN HER FIRST US CHAMPIONSHIP

# A STAR IS BORN

"I HAD A CONSTANT FEELING THAT BEING IN FIRST PLACE WAS A TEMPORARY OCCURRENCE AND THAT SOMEONE WOULD SOON OVERTAKE ME" SAYS ANNIE WANG, WHO WAS LEADING UP TO THE LAST ROUND WHEN HER TITLE CHANCES WERE DASHED BY NAZI PAIKIDZE IN A NERVE-WRACKING TIE-BREAKER.

by **WIM ANNIE WANG**

**G**oing into the U.S. Women's Championship, I hadn't really set myself a goal of achieving

x place or earning y number of points. I just wanted to gain some rating points from the tournament, since I had played badly in two tournaments prior to the Championship and needed to compensate for my losses there.

Maybe it was because of this that the entire tournament felt a bit unreal to me; the whole time, I almost couldn't believe that I was actually leading the Championship. I had a constant feeling that being in first place was a temporary occurrence and that someone would soon overtake me. This, however, is not to say that I didn't enjoy being the leader of the tournament. I felt a certain pressure to play my best every day and continue winning games, not only because of the tournament standings, but also because doing well meant that I, and the games that I played, faced increased scrutiny from both spectators and commentators.

Now, looking back on the tournament, I am happy with my overall result, even though I didn't win first. I do feel a little bitter that I ended up in second, because I had been leading for the majority of the tournament, but I also believe that Nazi deserved her title. If anything, not winning has been a beneficial experience for me, as it will provide further motivation for me to work hard and improve on my result in next year's Championship.



Photo by Lennart Ootjes



# ROUND BY ROUND

In the first five rounds of the 2018 US Women's Championship, Annie Wang and Nazi Paikidze were on the same score at the top of the leaderboard. Three consecutive wins then skyrocketed young Annie and with two more rounds to be played it was hard to imagine that she would not be the ultimate winner as she was a clear point ahead of Nazi.

In round 10 Paikidze beat Abrahamyan and closed the gap on the leader who drew with Zatonskih. The last round drama soon reached its climax when Wang messed up a promising position against last year's champion Foisor. It was Annie's first defeat in the event and it opened up the path for Nazi to try to win her game and claim the title. Instead, just minutes after Wang resigned, Paikidze offered a draw which was instantly accepted.

The title was to be decided in a tie-break where Annie again took an early lead but then Nazi demonstrated that experience counts — she equalized the score with the white pieces and then did not miss her chance to outplay already shaken Annie in the Armageddon game.

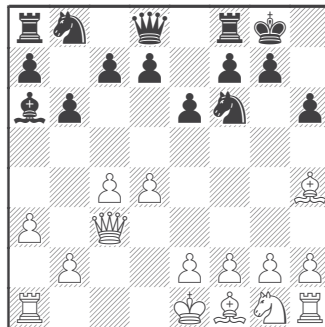
## E32

|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| Annie Wang        | 2321 |
| Dorsa Derakhshani | 2306 |

Round 6, US Women's Championship, St. Louis.2018

Going into this game, I really wanted to pull off a clean win, in order to end the first half of the tournament on a high note and preserve my position in the standings. At this point in the tournament, I was not feeling very confident about my play, since I thought I had not deserved to win several of my games, especially my third round battle against Rusudan Goletiani. Therefore, being able to win a nice game was definitely important to me, and I was happy with the way that this particular encounter turned out.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙c2 0-0 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♙xc3 b6 7.♙g5 h6 8.♙h4 ♙a6



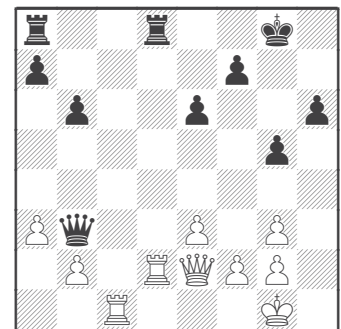
This is Dorsa's usual line in the Nimzo-Indian. However, when preparing for the round, I hadn't expected her to go into the Nimzo at all, since she had played the Gruenfeld against Anna Zatonskih only a few rounds before. Because of this, I hadn't prepared anything special for this line and so decided to play something normal to get an acceptable position out of the opening.

9.e3d5 10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.♙d3 c5 12.cxd5 cxd4 Not the best decision for Black. Correct was 12...♙xd3, which gives Black a slight advantage, due to her greater space on the queenside. After 13.♙xd3 might then follow 13...exd5 14.0-0 c4 15.♙c2 b5 with future ideas of ...a7-a5 and ...b5-b4. 13.♘xd4 ♙xd3 14.♙xd3 ♘c5 15.♙e2 g5 16.♙g3 Also possible was 16.♘c6. I had considered this move

during the game, but preferred the text continuation because it seemed to me that the knight on c6 would be better off on the d4 square, as in the case of the continuation 16...♙e8 17.♙g3 ♘xd5 18.♘d4.

16...♙xd5 17.0-0 At this point, I felt that I had a slight advantage, due to Black's weakened pawns on the queenside. However, in order to preserve this advantage, instead of castling right away I should have played 17.f3, preventing Black from bringing a knight to e4.

17...♘fe4 18.♙fd1 ♙fd8 19.♙ac1 ♘g3 20.hxg3 ♘b3 21.♘xb3 ♙xb3 22.♙d2

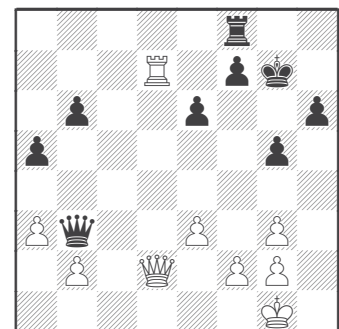


By now, I realized I no longer had the superior position. I was hoping that Black would now make a mistake and play 22...♙ac8, since that would allow me to trade a pair of rooks and take control of the d-file, thereby restoring my advantage.

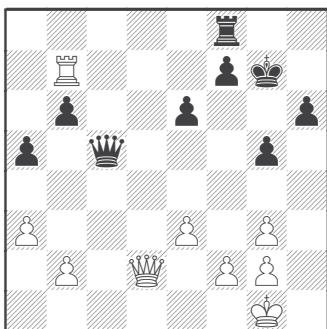
22...♙ac8 With a move like 22...♙a4, Black could have maintained equality and soon developed the a8 rook on the c-file. The game might then have continued 23.♙c3 ♙ac8 24.♙dd3 ♘g7 25.♙d2 ♙xd3 26.♙xd3 ♙xc3 27.♙xc3+ ♘g6.

23.♙xc8 ♙xc8 24.♙h5 With the intention of bringing the rook to the seventh rank, where White will be able to put pressure on the f7 pawn.

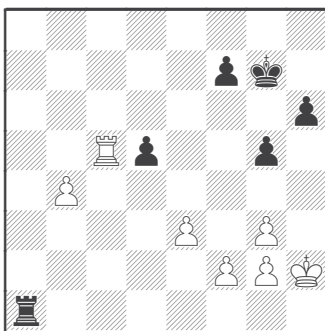
24...♘g7 25.♙d7 ♙f8 26.♙e2 a5 27.♙d2



27...♖c4 This is a mistake. Better was 27...♖c8, which prevents the loss of one of Black's queenside pawns. By playing this move, Dorsa could have retained chances of a draw as although White is still better after 28.♗d4+ ♔g6 29.♗e4+ ♔g7 30.♗f3, it is not by much.  
28.♗b7 Now White has a clear advantage.  
28...♗c5

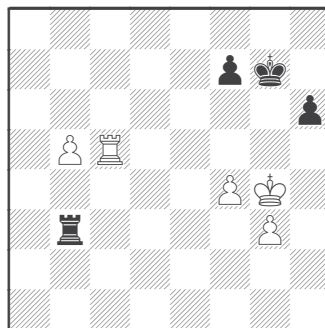


29.b4 29.♔h2 would have been a useful prophylactic move, as it prevents any worrying checks on the back rank. Then White could bring her queen to a more active square, such as d7 for example.  
29...axb4 So 29...g4 can be met by 30.♗d7, threatening to take Black's e6 pawn, and after 30...♔g6 31.♖c7 ♗d5 32.♗xd5 exd5 33.♖c6+ deliver a double attack on the black king and pawn.  
30.axb4 ♗e5 31.♖xb6 ♖a8 Possible was 31...♖c8, hoping to activate the rook along the c-file, e.g. 32.♖d6 ♗a1+ 33.♔h2 h5 34.♖d7 ♖c4.  
32.♖c6 ♗d5 33.♗xd5 ♖a1+ 34.♔h2 exd5 35.♖c5



During the game, I knew that I had a large advantage here. However, I was rather concerned about my ability to convert the position to a win, fearing that I would be unable to activate my king, particularly if Black managed to play ...g5-g4.

35...♖a2 36.f4 Not the best move. Better was 36.f3, covering the g4 square and preparing to take Black's d5 pawn. Then 36...♖e2 37.♖xd5 g4 38.♔g1.  
36...gxf4 37.gxf4 ♖a3 38.♖xd5 ♖xe3 39.b5 ♖b3 40.g3 Preparing to move the king to a more useful and active square.  
40...♖b2+ 41.♔h3 ♖b4 42.♔g4 ♖b3 43.♖c5



43...♔h7 This loses immediately. With 43...♔f8, Black could have survived for a while longer, since White's king cannot immediately approach the b5 pawn to help it reach its queening square, because 44.♔f5?! is met by 44...♖xg3 45.♔e5 ♖g6.  
44.♔f5 ♔g7 45.g4 Faster was 45.♔e5 ♖xg3 46.♔d6 ♖g6+ 47.♔c7 ♖e6 48.b6.  
45...♖b4 46.♔e5 f6+ 47.♔d6 ♖xf4 48.b6 ♖xg4 49.b7 ♖b4 50.♔c6 ♖xb7 51.♔xb7 ♔g6 52.♔c6 h5 53.♔d5 ♔f5 54.♔d4+ ♔g4 55.♔e3 h4 56.♔f2 f5 57.♔g2

Black resigned

## D61

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Sabina Foisor | 2308 |
| Annie Wang    | 2321 |

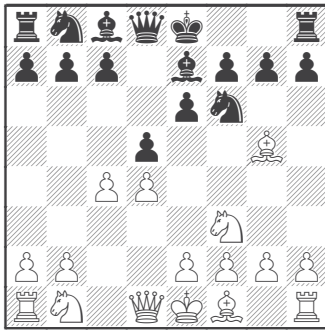
Round 11, US Women's Championship, St. Louis 2018

This game was played in the last round of the tournament, and my position at the top of the standings put me under pressure to do well and maintain my half-point lead.

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘f3 d5 I had expected that Sabina would adopt this opening against me. We had already played a similar line in our previous encounter at a norm tournament also held at the St. Louis Chess Club.  
4.♘g5 ♘e7

US WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP, Saint Louis, MO, April 17-30 2018.

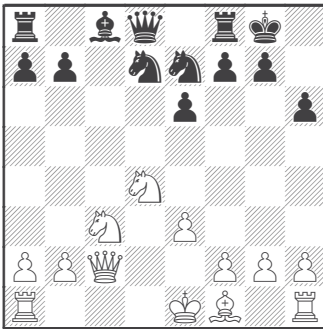
| RK  | NAME              | ELO  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | PTS |
|-----|-------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-----|
| 1.  | NAZI PAIKIDZE     | 2352 |   | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½  | ½  | 1  | 8   |
| 2.  | ANNIE WANG        | 2321 | ½ |   | 1 | ½ | 1 | ½ | 0 | 1 | ½ | 1  | 1  | 1  | 8   |
| 3.  | IRINA KRUSH       | 2422 | ½ | 0 |   | 1 | ½ | 1 | ½ | 0 | ½ | 1  | 1  | 1  | 7   |
| 4.  | ANNA ZATONSKI     | 2444 | ½ | ½ | 0 |   | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1  | ½  | 1  | 6½  |
| 5.  | JENNIFER YU       | 2367 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 |   | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 6½  |
| 6.  | TATEV ABRAHAMYAN  | 2366 | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | 1 | 1 | 0  | 1  | ½  | 5½  |
| 7.  | SABINA FOISOR     | 2308 | 0 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ |   | 0 | 1 | ½  | ½  | ½  | 5   |
| 8.  | ANNA SHAREVICH    | 2281 | 0 | 0 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 |   | 1 | 0  | 0  | ½  | 4½  |
| 9.  | AKSHITA GORTI     | 2252 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |   | 1  | 1  | ½  | 4½  |
| 10. | MAGGIE FENG       | 2243 | ½ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | ½ | 1 | 0 |    | 1  | ½  | 4½  |
| 11. | RUSUDAN GOLETIANI | 2306 | ½ | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | 0 | ½ | 1 | 0 | 0  |    | 1  | 3½  |
| 12. | DORSA DERAKHSHANI | 2306 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½  | 0  |    | 2½  |



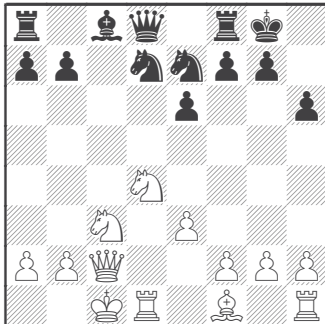
5. ♔c2 This was a complete surprise for me; not only had I not prepared for it, I had also never played against it before. 5. ♖c3 is the normal continuation, transposing to one of the main lines of the QGD.

5...0-0 6.e3 ♖bd7 Not the most accurate move. Better was 6...c5, a common reaction in many lines of the QGD. Then 7.dxc5 ♖bd7 8. ♖c3 h6 9. ♗xf6 ♖xf6.

7. ♖c3 h6 8. ♗h4 c5 9. cxd4 cxd4 10. ♖xd4 ♖xd5 11. ♗xe7 ♖xe7



By this stage, I thought the position was almost equal. Admittedly, White does have a small advantage due to her better placed pieces, but Black should be fine. 12.0-0-0



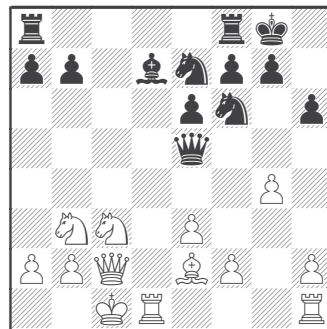
Not the correct plan. Castling queenside



not only fails to give White any advantage but even harms her by placing her king in danger of attack by Black's pieces. White should just develop normally, leaving Black with a few difficulties with regard to the placement of her pieces. Better was 12. ♗e2 ♖f6 13. ♖d1 ♗d7 14. ♖d2 a6, hoping to control the b5 square and give the black pieces more room for maneuver.

12...♗a5 Just as in the previous variation, 12...a6 is a useful move here. Black wants to push her queenside pawns in order to facilitate the attack on White's king. Then 13. ♗a4 ♖b8, once again preparing ...b7-b5.

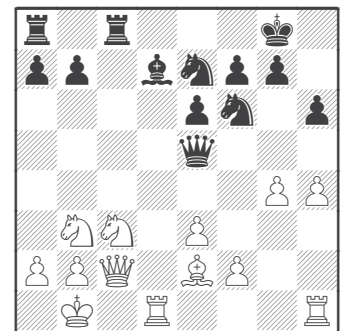
13. ♖b3 ♗e5 14.g4 ♖f6 15. ♗e2 ♗d7



Black now stands better, since her attack is progressing more rapidly than White's.

▲ Sabina Foisor vs. Annie Wang, US Women's Championship, St. Louis 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

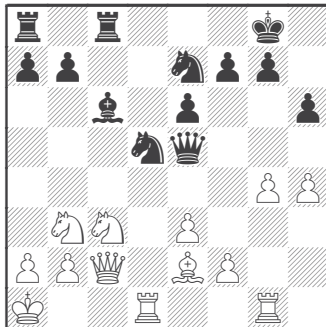
16.h4 ♖fc8 Not the most logical move. I should have put the a8 rook on c8, not the f8 rook, and then later play ...♖fd8. 17. ♗b1



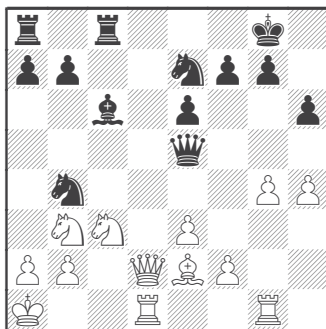
17...♖fd5 I moved the f6 knight to d5 because I wanted to prevent any ideas by White of playing g4-g5. However, had I calculated all my options thoroughly I would have realized that g4-g5 is not dangerous, thereby suggesting that my knight should stay on f6, where it is guarding both my bishop and king. The correct way to play was 17...♖ed5. Black wants to trade off



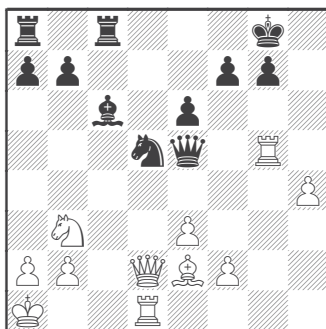
White's c3 knight, after which the white king will be weakened and exposed to attack, e.g. 18.♖d4 a5 19.♘d2 ♗xc3+ 20.bxc3 ♘d5. 18.♞a1 ♗c6 19.♞hg1



19...♗b4? An inaccuracy, since kicking the queen to a better square only benefits White. The engine suggests 19...♞h2, with the intention of capturing some white pawns after 20.g5 ♞xf2 21.gxh6 ♗f5 22.e4 ♗de3. However, a more human move is 19...♗xc3, when Black simply trades off the queens into a slightly better endgame after 20.♞xc3 ♞xc3 21.bxc3 ♗d5. 20.♞d2



20...♗ed5? After this Black is just worse. Better is 20...♞h2 with the same idea as before. 21.♗xd5 ♗xd5 22.g5 hxg5 White now has a winning advantage. Black should have kept the kingside closed by 22...h5. 23.♞xg5



▶ Annie Wang and Nazi Paikidze, US Women's Championship, St. Louis 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.



| US WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP, Tie-Break |               |      |   |   |   |     |
|------------------------------------|---------------|------|---|---|---|-----|
| RK                                 | NAME          | RTG  | 1 | 2 | 3 | PTS |
| 1                                  | NAZI PAIKIDZE | 2352 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2   |
| 2                                  | ANNIE WANG    | 2321 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1   |

23...♞f6 Perhaps 23...f5 24.♗d4 ♞c7 25.♗d3 ♞d6 would have put up more resistance. 24.♗dg1 ♗e7 25.♞xg7+ ♞xg7 26.♞xg7+ ♗xg7 27.♞d4+ f6 28.♞d6 ♗f7 29.♗c5 ♗d5 30.♗h5+ ♗f8



31.b4 ♞xc5 32.bxc5 f5 33.f3 ♞c8 34.e4 fxe4 35.fxe4 ♗xe4 36.♞xe6 ♗d5 37.♞f6+

Black resigned ■

This is a fantastic result for her. Only the future will tell, but it's great to see another bright young star shining in American Chess.  
**Greg Kelly,**  
North Palm Beach, FL

Depending upon how she performs the rest of the year, the next U.S. Championships could have a new champion.  
**Thom Fallis,**  
Tucker, GA

I hope so, but corporate sponsors need to continue to support women's chess in the U.S.  
**David Beaudoin,**  
Washington, NJ

I think so. But her development over the next few years will tell, obviously. I hope she keeps progressing and can become a real world championship contender.  
**Joe Byrnes,**  
Kissimmee, FL

The 15 year old girl competition is pretty fierce in

America and although Annie has done well, there are others — in particular Emily Nguyen from Texas who is “knocking on her door”.

**Jeff French,**  
*Lakeside, TX*

The combination of youth and experience — it only makes her a force to be reckoned with.

**Larry Behrendt,**  
*Ewing, NJ*

Absolutely. She seems to have the interest and the desire. American chess just keeps getting better.

**Melvin DuMars,**  
*Normal, IL*

It all depends on how much time she is able to devote to chess. Her education will be competing for time as it was during the Championship.

**Christopher Moscinski,**  
*Bronx, NY*

Congrats to Nazi who did earn her success. But it broke my heart when Annie lost!

**Dan O'Hanlon,**  
*Huntington, WV*

Hard to say with younger players, especially women. Sadly, so many have dropped pursuit of chess goals upon entering university. Only time will tell.

**Mark Warriner,**  
*Henrico, VA*

Certainly, a champion in the making.

**Saad Al-Hariri,**  
*Alexandria, VA*

She has a couple of years before going to college and retires from chess.

**Tony Wong,**  
*Glendale, CA*

Insofar as she was outperforming most of the professionals in the field, while returning to her hotel

**We saw a great fight in the finish of the U.S. Women's Championship. In the end Nazi Paikidze triumphed over Annie Wang but the 15-year-old truly made her mark. Do you see Annie as a new great star of American chess?**

room to do homework and study for AP exams every night, I think the answer is a clear yes. I think the only question is whether she will choose to pursue that path, or if she will choose to forgo chess stardom for what is likely a very promising academic future and a more lucrative career than chess professional.

**Eric Strachan,**  
*Tucson, AZ*

I hope so. I know a lot of young talented players begin to focus on school and other careers, but hopefully we can find a way to compensate talent like hers to make chess careers more feasible.

**Ryan Billingsley,**  
*Fayetteville, AR*

It could be the beginning of an era. The question is will chess remain a priority for

Annie in the future? She is very young and life has many roads to travel.

**Christopher Baumgartner,**  
*Des Plaines, IL*

I am not sure, but I think she is a good player!

**Jeff Querner,**  
*Terre Haute, IN*

Yes, Wang demonstrated a huge amount of potential — especially her ability to handle stress at a very young age.

**Landon Elswick,**  
*Emerald Isle, NC*

She will need to balance her chess career with her education, which can be tough.

**Dennis Mays,**  
*Rochester, MN*

The next few years will tell. She may decide her future lies in another direction and she takes a serious college major.

**Jim Duffy,**  
*Gonzales, LA*

Since July 2017 she seems to have made quite a jump and her performance in the 2018 Championship will definitely make her hungrier!

**Mehran Divanbaigyzand**

*McLean, VA*

I watched the live coverage, and both Annie and Nazi showed remarkable poise and grit. Nazi has been and continues to be a great role model for women. Annie is still young, and her time will come.

**Paul Matthews,**  
*Bridgewater, NJ*

Depends on her education path.

**Greg Smith,**  
*Leicester, NC*

Annie Wang put a valiant effort, like a wildfire

engulfing everything in her path. However, like many youngsters, they sometimes lack the temperament and grace that only comes from age and experience. I believe this was Paikidze's strength that ultimately lead to her victory.

**James D. Preece,**  
*Huntington, WV*

We should look forward to seeing much more of Annie Wang.

**Howard Decker,**  
*Rochester, NY*

Annie Wang has a bright future ahead of her if she can build on her continued success. Time will tell.

**Manuel Infante,**  
*Oklahoma City, OK*

Too early to say.

**Richard Reich,**  
*Healdsburg, CA*

I can see this young woman as a new great star in American chess.

**Christopher Johnson,**  
*Pensacola, FL*

Perhaps. There are so many options at age 15. Will chess be her career in three to seven years?

**Stan Evans,**  
*Louisville, KY*

Possibly, only time will tell.

**Laurence Bonsack,**

*North Highlands, CA*

Annie played very good chess and should be a force to be reckoned with in the future.

**Mark Capron,**  
*Iowa City, IA*

It's going to be difficult since there are a lot of excellent Chinese players. Annie is young and she'll need to keep working hard.

**Jon Bilbao,**  
*Miami, FL*

# A GRANDE FINALE!

So it was with the arrivals of the 2018 Final Four of College Chess. From 2011-2017 SPICE Coach Susan Polgar had won seven consecutive championships; the first two with Texas Tech University, and the next five

Round One featured the matchups Webster – TTU and SLU – UTRGV. Webster managed to emerge victorious against their coach's former team as team captain Ray Robson won a nice game against Pavlo Vorontsov while the other three boards held.

The Saturday evening round saw UTRGV taking on Webster while TTU and SLU were both looking to get into the win column. Disaster struck the defending champs as GM Alexander Shimanov,

With Texas Tech defeating SLU with a final score of 2½-1½ the standings heading into the final round were:

This meant that all four teams were mathematically still alive, but the reality





seemed to be that with the final round matchups of SLU – Webster and TTU – UTRGV, the “other” team from Saint Louis, once a strong contender for the title, would be relegated to the role of playing the spoiler.

As the round progressed it seemed like SLU would fall short. After two match performances which must have left them feeling quite disappointed, they seemed once again to be in some trouble. Alexander Ipatov had won on Board One for SLU, but Jorge once again won for Webster on Board Four, and on the second board Robson seemed to be winning his final collegiate contest.

The Vaqueros of UTRGV had taken their match 3-1 over the Knight Raiders of Texas Tech with team captain Vladimir Belous managing a clean 3-0 record, but if Robson converted his winning position over Swiercz then their 2½-1½ team victory would give both schools a final score of 7½ with Webster winning on tiebreaks.

However, Swiercz wasn’t ready to acquiesce to this fate and he continued to create complications whenever he could, and when it was all over he had managed to hold the position. With this result the Billikens had dug in their heels and held the Gorloks to a 2-2 draw.

With this the streak was over. A new champion would wear the crown.

Final Standings:

UTRGV – 7½  
Webster – 7  
Texas Tech – 5  
SLU – 4½

Two days later it was my great pleasure to speak with the team and their coach over the phone. I will have a full length interview with them in the next issue, but here are some highlights of our conversation.

How did you feel when you realized that UTRGV was about to become the national champion?

● I won my game and then just left to eat. According to the game situation (author’s note: between Robson and Swiercz) I thought we would wind up tied with Webster on points and finish second. Since every time I support a team in something like soccer or basketball my team always loses I just went to have lunch and tried not to think about it. Then when I came back I saw some of the Webster guys and they were congratulating me for being first. I was shocked, but super happy!

● Well, to be honest, I went with Vladimir to get some lunch, so when we came back it was quite a surprise. The game was completely lost for the player from Saint Louis so I just assumed he would lose the game and we would tie for first but finish second since we lost the match with Webster.

● It was a great pleasure. I was playing for my university for the first time. I feel satisfied since I was preparing hard for this tournament.

What made you want to go to university in Brownsville, TX?

● I have a degree in Russia, but honestly my life was boring and I didn’t see any goals in my future. When Bartek invited me to this university I wanted to go. First I went to the language institute since I didn’t speak any English at all two years ago. I studied a lot. It was hard, but once I passed and was accepted into UTRGV I never regretted the decision. I like the school and my classes and studying chess with Bartek.



GM Vladimir Belous



GM Andrey Stukopin



GM Hovhannes Gabuzyan



● Well, mainly the coach, Bartek Macieja. He's quite famous in Europe and the rest of the world since he's a former European champion. I like his style as a chess player and I like him as a person.

Did you go about preparing for the Final Four any differently than other events you play in? Did you work any harder or change your training routine?

● Yes. In Europe and in Russia it's very rare that tournaments have two games a day. So I worked harder than

normal since one of my strongest suits is preparation. So with two games on the first day I just worked harder to prepare and saved the rest of my time for sleeping. I was able to stay in my opening preparation for at least the first 20 moves of each game.

● I was really busy with my classes this semester since it's my last semester and I'm about to graduate, so I didn't prepare so much for this tournament. It worked out, but I would probably try to prepare better next time.

● I played some training games and was trying for the last month to really involve myself in chess. I was reading a lot of articles and just trying to be in shape.

|||||

Congratulations to Coach Bartek Macieja and all of his players on the Final Four team; GM's Vladimir Belous, Kamil Dragun, Andrey Stukopin, Hovhannes Gabuzyan, and Carlos Antonio Hevia Alejano, winners of the 2018 President's Cup! ■

# WEBSTER UNIVERSITY NO LONGER US COLLEGIATE TEAM CHAMPIONS!

By **GM PRIYADHARSHAN KANNAPPAN** |||||



April 1, 2018 when the world was observing April Fools Day, the Webster team stepped out to do battle one last time for the 2017-18 Collegiate Season, by playing against our city rivals St. Louis University (SLU).

The game point situation going into this round was Webster was at 5, UTRGV at 4½, TTU at 4, and SLU at 2½. Mathematically everyone had a shot at the title, with the odds favoring the five-time national champion team Webster.

Our strategy was traditional in team tournaments; to stay solid with the black pieces and go for the kill with White!

Vasif Durarybayli and Peter Prohaszka were given the task of holding the fort with the black pieces on Boards One and Three respectively, and Ray Robson and Jorge Cori were given the white pieces to go fearlessly for the win on Boards Two and Four.

An hour into the game, as the clock struck 10:00am, Jorge and Ray were still in their home preparation. Ray had a +0.6 position, and Jorge had a huge lead in time. Peter was also doing great on the clock, having around a 25 minute lead with a solid position and no clear weaknesses. However, trouble was brewing on Board One, as Vasif got into a slightly worse position against Turkish GM Alexander Ipatov.

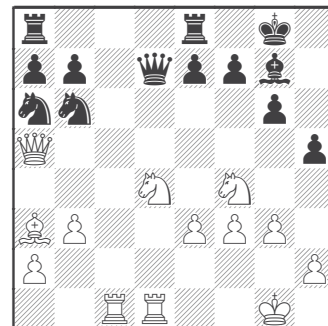
As the clock ticked its way to 11:00am, Jorge had a clear advantage, and his victory was certain, which was the start we needed. Ray's position against the Polish GM Dariusz Swiercz was unclear, but he had continued to retain his lead in time, which gave us a lot of hope.

Vasif made a huge blunder allowing ♖c6 and he had very little chance of salvaging that position, which was the first major step in the wrong direction.

|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| Alexander Ipatov | 2665 |
| Vasif Durarbayli | 2620 |

US Collegiate Team Championship  
Final Four, New York 2018

What is the only move that saves Black?



22...♖ac8?? Not this! However 22...♗ed8

does the job.

**23. ♖c6!** Black completely missed this and went on to lose a long game.

**Black resigned**

Peter had made a few strategic concessions and was on the verge of getting a very cramped position against Yaroslav Zhrebukh, but the silver lining was that nothing was decisive, as the position was static. The mood in the Webster table was getting a bit worrisome, as UTRGV was also fighting tooth and nail against TTU with only Vorontsov (TTU) taking a quick draw against Stukopin (UTRGV).

As we moved to the midpoint of the day, the temperature on the second floor of Marshall Chess Club, where all teams had their base camps, was rising. No clear result was yet in sight, and clocks on most boards showed less than ten minutes for each side.

Then Jorge Cori brought home the point...

## D02

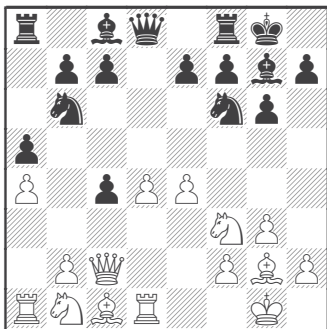
Jorge Cori Tello 2658

Francesco Rambaldi 2565

US Collegiate Team Championship  
Final Four, New York 2018

Jorge Cori was my roommate in this tournament, so I was a witness to the spectacular preparation that gave our team a point without even breaking much sweat over the board.

**1. ♖f3 d5 2. g3 ♘d7 3. d4 ♖gf6 4. ♗g2 g6 5. 0-0 ♗g7 6. c4 dxc4 7. ♖c2 ♖b6 8. e4 0-0 9. a4 a5 10. ♗d1**

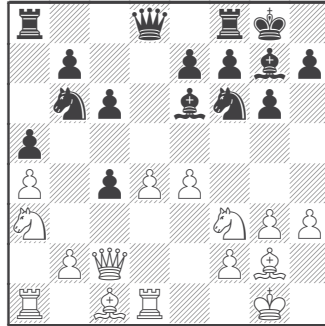


**10...c6** The move preferred by Nakamura, and possibly the best way

to play this line, is **10... ♗g4 11. h3 ♗xf3 12. ♗xf3 ♖c8 13. ♗g2±.**

**11. ♖a3** This was suggested by GM Alex Shimanov, as he had previously employed it against GM Kaidanov in 2015.

**11... ♗e6 12. h3**

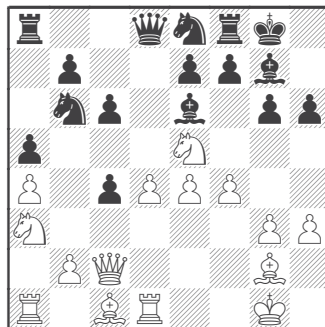


**12...h6?** With hindsight, Black is already struggling after this innocuous pawn push. The weird looking queen move **12... ♖c8** would give a glimmer of hope for Black, although after **13. ♖h2 ♖e8 14. ♖g5 f5 15. d5 cxd5 16. exd5 ♗d7 17. ♖b5±** his pieces remain very passive.

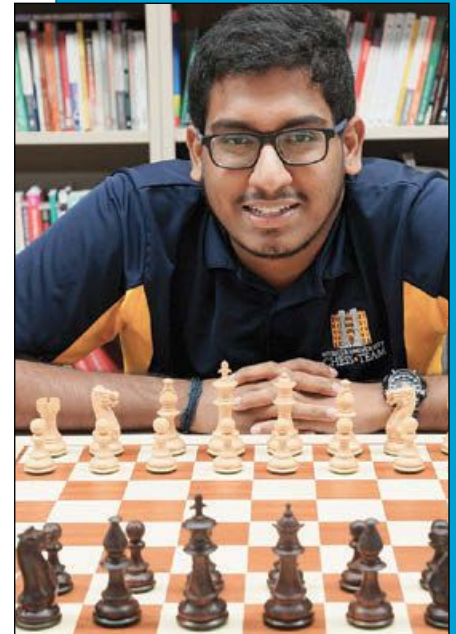
**13. ♖e5** The improvement suggested by Shimanov, first played in a Swedish tournament in 2003, is **13. ♗e3 ♖e8 14. ♖e5 ♖d6 15. f4** when White had good compensation and a strong center for the pawn in A. Shimanov 2593 - G. Kaidanov 2561, Las Vegas 2015.

**13... ♖e8** As we all know, when cramped the right idea is to exchange some pieces. However even **13... ♖fd7** doesn't help Black much after **14. ♖exc4 ♖xc4 15. ♖xc4 ♖b6 16. ♖e5±.**

**14. f4**



Although not previously in the database, I think this is the best move in this position. White has the straightforward plan of playing g2-g4 and f4-f5 and



**Priyadharshan Kannappan**

is an Indian grandmaster, living in St. Louis for the past six years. He did his BS Marketing from Lindenwood University and will be graduating soon with an MA in Management and Leadership, with a certificate in Business Analytics from Webster University. He has donned various hats within the chess community as a player, commentator, writer, manager. You can learn more about him in [www.priyadharshan.com](http://www.priyadharshan.com)

then at the right moment picking up the c4 pawn, after which he can enjoy his enormous space advantage and better placed pieces

**14... ♖d6??** Black immediately goes astray. Moreover White had barely spent any time on the clock, whereas Black had already used up nearly half of his allotted time. **14... ♖d6!?** would



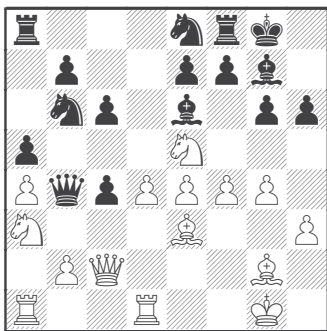


▲ Jorge Cori Tello, Photo by Paul Troung.

have offered some practical chances to complicate matters, e.g. after 15.g4 f5 16.♖xg6 fxe4 17.♗xf8 ♖xf8 18.♙xe4 ♗xe4 19.♖xe4 ♖f6± when his control of the light squares should offer some symbolic compensation for the exchange.

15.♙e3 15.g4 was more precise and would result in a winning position after 15...♖b4 16.f5 ♙c8 17.♗axc4.

15...♖b4 16.g4

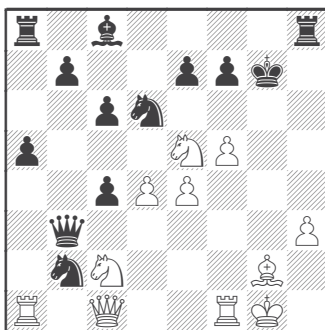


16...♗d6 As he is positionally lost, Black should have gone on a pawn hunt with 16...♗xa4! 17.♗axc4 ♙xc4 18.♗xc4 ♗b6 19.♗xb6 ♖xb6 20.♗d3±.

17.f5 gxf5 18.gxf5 ♙c8 19.♖c1 ♗xa4 How often do we see a 2550+ player getting demolished so incisively straight out of the opening?

20.♙xh6 ♗xb2 21.♙xg7 ♗xg7

22.♗c2 ♖b3 23.♗f1 ♗h8



24.♗a3 ♖b6 25.♗g3+ ♗f8 26.♖g5 ♗e8 27.♗g6+ fxg6 28.fxg6+ ♗g8 29.♖xe7 As Black seems to have no chance in this opening, he needs to find an improvement as early as move 10.

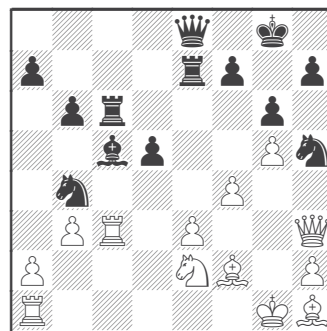
**Black resigned**

Meanwhile Peter had managed to swap queens leaving him little chance of losing, which was wonderful news for the Webster team. Ray had misplayed his position a bit, but Dariusz's time trouble gave us a lot of hope; Vasif was on the verge of losing, which would make the scoreline 1-1 in the third hour of play in this match.

Vladimir Belous (UTRGV), who was in great form, capitalized on a huge blunder by Baryshpolets to wrap up the game...

|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| Andey Baryshpolets | 2597 |
| Vladimir Belous    | 2575 |

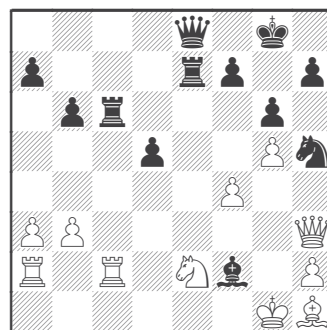
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38.a3 ♗c2! Moves like this shows Belous' tremendous form in this event.

39.♗xc2 ♙xe3 40.♗aa2?? Baryshpolets cracks under pressure, and misses a simple tactic. The only move to keep the game going was 40.♗c3 ♙xf2+ 41.♗xf2 ♗xf4 42.♖f3 ♗e5±.

40...♙xf2+



41.♗f1 The tactic that White missed was 41.♗xf2 ♗xc2 42.♗xc2 ♗xe2+ 43.♗xe2 ♖xe2+ 44.♗xe2 ♗xf4+ 45.♗e3 ♗xh3 winning for Black.

41...♙c5 Now it's game over.

42.b4 ♗xf4 43.♖h4 ♗xe2 44.♗xe2 ♙e3 45.♙xd5 ♗c1+ 46.♗g2 ♗g1+ 47.♗f3 ♖d7

**White resigned**

Then Evgeny Shtembuliak gifted his opponent Hovhannes Gabuzyan by playing ...f6?? which killed his own bishop for the remainder of the game. It was looking more like UTRGV would score 3-1, and if Webster managed to score 2½, we would win the title on tiebreaks.

Somewhere around 12:45pm Peter made a few erroneous decisions, giving a

Yaroslav Zhrebukh, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



pawn and a nice advantage to Zhrebukh. Ray had managed to win a pawn, and was outplaying his opponent in a rook and knight endgame, which was the first real sign of the title slowly slipping away from the hands of Webster University.

In an amazing way Shtembuliak had built a kind of fortress that Gabuzyan couldn't break, and a draw on that board would have been so favorable for us, but Caissa was on the UTRGV side, as Shtembuliak faltered after a spirited defense for 30 odd moves. UTRGV ended up with 7½ board points, and now all eyes turned to the Webster games.

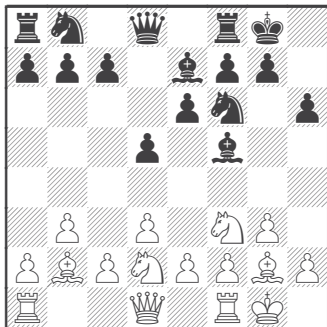
Finally, Peter held on to draw a worse endgame thanks to tenacious and resourceful play, although Yaroslav missed clear winning chances in mutual time pressure.

## A07

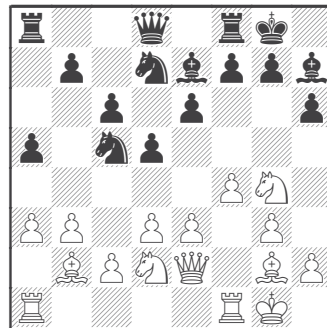
|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| Yaroslav Zhrebukh | 2633 |
| Peter Prohaszka   | 2611 |

US Collegiate Team Championship  
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1. d3 d5 2. b3 f5 3. b2 e6 4. g3 f6  
5. g2 Lately Zhrebukh has shown a  
preference for double fianchetto setups.  
5... e7 6. 0-0 0-0 7. d3 h6 8. b2



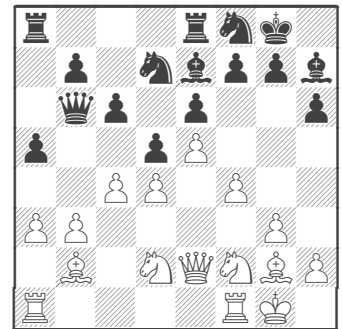
in view of the tournament situation, I like White's opening choice. Yaro is getting ready for a long drawn out game, where he can change the nature of the position according to the requirements of his team.  
8... h7 9. e3 c6 10. e2 a5 11. a3 a6  
12. e5 c5 13. f4 fd7 14. g4



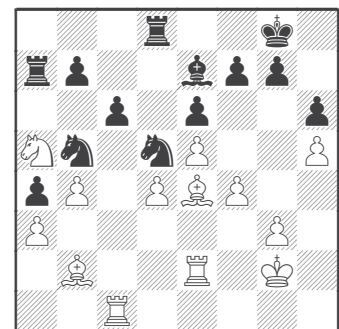
According to the database, this is a new move. The battle lines are slowly being drawn. White intends to push e3-e4 and slowly create an attack on the kingside as his minor pieces are better positioned than their black counterparts. The good news for Black is that he has a solid game and can try to gain more space for his pieces. Also Peter loves to play long games, I have rarely seen his games end before the three hour mark, so that was another positive for him.

14... f6 Peter spent close to 30 minutes on this move because he wasn't really comfortable playing ...f7-f5, as that would lock in his bishop, and also weaken the e5 square forever. However 14... f5 is the best move according to the computer, which cares less about long term positional implications. Knowing Peter, who is known for his positional chess, I can completely understand why he wasn't attracted to this move which anyway does leave White slightly better

after 15. f2 f6 16. f3.  
15. f2 fd7 16. e4 e8 17. e5  
f8?! 17... a6 stops White from  
pushing d3-d4 and allows Black to  
counter at once on the queenside  
and center, e.g. 18. f3 b5 or 18. c4  
b5 19. cxb5 cxb5 20. d4 b6.  
18. d4! fd7 19. c4± More space,  
better pieces, and more time on the  
clock, what else does White need?  
19... b6



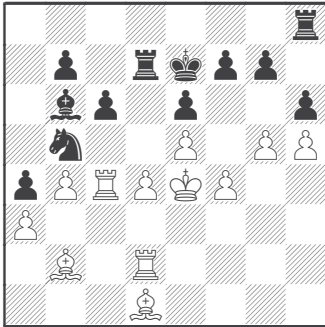
20. f1?! 20. e3, followed by  
capturing on c4 with the knight and  
then occupying the outpost on d6, is the  
best idea in this position, i.e. 20... dxc4  
21. xc4 a7 22. e4 b6 23. d6±.  
20... dxc4 21. xc4 a7 22. e2 b6  
23. fe4 ed8 24. h1 d5 25. d4  
d7 26. f1 a4 27. b4 a6 28. ae1  
7b6 29. a5? xe2 30. e2  
30... a7 30... xa5! would have been a  
very nice exchange sacrifice and allowed  
Black to take over the initiative: 31. bxa5  
c4 32. a6 bxa6 33. a1 de3 34. c3  
b8 35. d2 xd2 36. ex3 c4 37. f3  
e4 38. f2 d5.  
31. c1 xe4 32. xe4 a8 33. h4  
ac7 34. h5 b5 35. g2



We have reached a position where  
White's pawn breaks on the kingside do  
not yield any great dividends.  
35... d7 36. f3 d8 37. d4 b6



38.♖d2 ♜xc4 39.♗xc4 ♙b6 40.g4  
♗a8 41.♙c2 ♜f8 42.g5 ♜e7 43.♜e4  
♗h8 44.♙d1



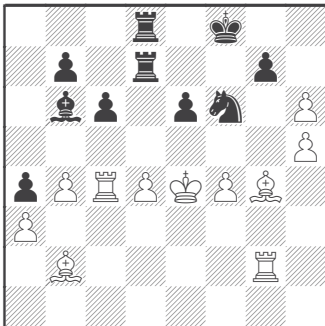
44...♗a8?! The precise way to liquidate was 44...h5 45.f5 g6 46.exf6+ gxf6 47.gxf6+ ♜f7.

45.♜e3 ♜c7 46.♜e4 ♜d5 47.♗g2 ♜f8 48.♙g4

By now, both sides were in time trouble and commit a number of inaccuracies.

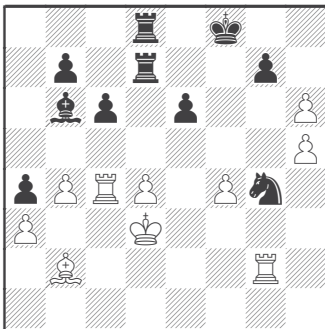
48...♗ad8? 48...♜e7 49.gxh6 f5+ 50.exf6+ ♜xf6+ 51.♜d3 gxh6 52.♙f3=.

49.gxh6 f5+ 50.exf6 ♜xf6+



51.♜d3? Correct was 51.♜f3 ♜xg4 52.h7 ♜f7 53.♗xg4 ♗h8 54.d5 ♗xh7 55.dxc6 bxc6 56.♗xc6 winning.

51...♜xg4



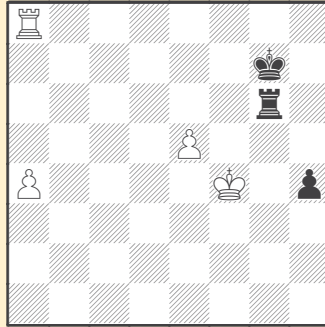
52.♗xg4 52.h7 isn't effective now, as if White ever plays d4-d5 Black takes on d5

Kamil Dragun 2597

Sergei Matsenko 2560

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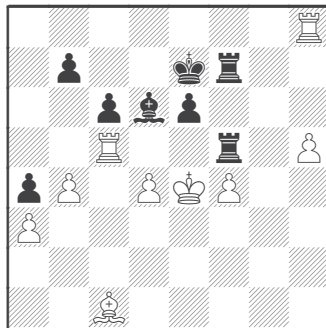
Let's look at the game from this point, so we can once again see how tricky rook endgames can be.



48.♗a7+ ♜f8?? Losing control of the h7 square is a blunder, but White fails

with a check. After 52...♜f7 53.♗xg4 ♗h8 54.b5 cxb5 55.♗b4 the game is equal.

52...gxh6 53.♗g6 ♗f7 54.♜e4 ♗d5 55.♗xh6 ♙c7 56.♙c1 ♗df5 57.♗c5 ♜e7 58.♗h8 ♙d6



59.♗xf5? Correct was 59.♗a5! ♗xa5 60.bxa5 winning.

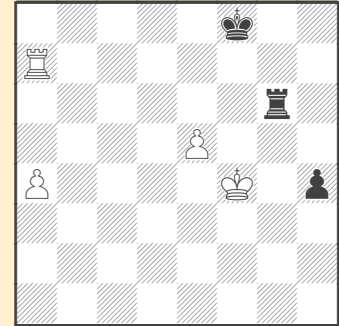
59...exf5+ 60.♜f3 ♗f8 61.♗xf8 ♜xf8 62.♜e3 ♜g7 63.d5 ♜h6 64.dxc6 bxc6 65.♙b2 ♜xh5 66.♙e5 ♙f8 67.♜f3

Draw

In the meantime, Ray was still maneuvering his way in a pawn up endgame with both players living dangerously on the 30 second increment. Ray was in a must win situation to keep the winning streak alive for his team.

The clock was way past 1:00pm, and all four teams were glued to this

to exploit it. The two ways to draw were 48...♜g8 49.♗c7 ♗a6= and 48...♜h6 49.♗c7 ♗a6 50.♜f5 ♗xa4 51.e6 ♗a1 52.e7 ♗f1+ 53.♜e6 ♗e1+ 54.♜f7 ♗f1+ 55.♜e8=.



49.♗c7 The only way to victory was 49.a5 h3 50.♗h7 ♗a6 51.♜f5 ♜g8 52.♗xh3 ♗xa5 53.♜f6 ♗a1 54.e6 ♗f1+ 55.♜e7 with a technically won endgame.

49...h3 50.♗c2 ♗a6 51.♗a2 h2 52.♗xh2 ♗xa4+ 53.♜f5 ♗a6 54.e6

Draw

one game. After ups and downs like a turbulent airplane, Ray got into a position with three pawns and a rook against rook and knight. The engines started to scream that White was winning this endgame, due to the misplaced knight, but as we all know a knight is a very tricky piece with lots of forking ideas.

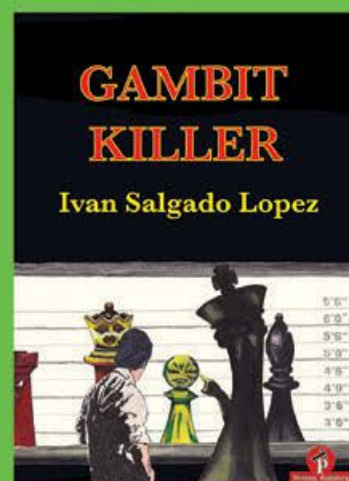
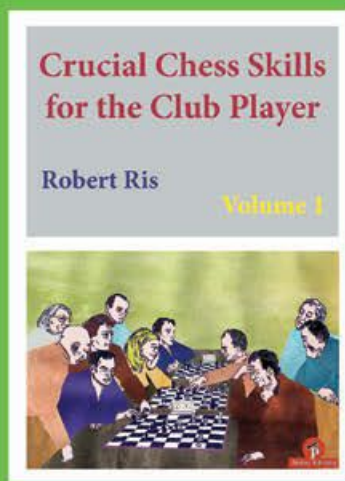
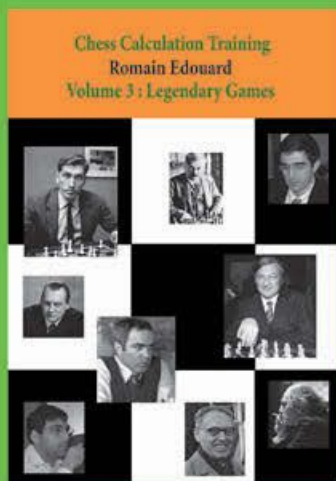
Come 1:20 pm, and Ray had played ♗h8 with a very obvious threat of a8=♖, but what he had missed was the intermediate check ♗a4 which pushes the white king from the optimal square on d4 to the distant one on b4, whereas if Ray had played ♗h7+ or e6 instead of the ill fated ♗h8 move, he would have won, and in turn Webster would have won the President's Cup on tiebreaks.

As the game liquidated to a draw, it was UTRGV who were going home with the President's Cup as Webster managed to score only seven game points. It was a well-deserved victory for the players and coach of UTRGV team.

We needed several minutes for the thought to sink in that we are no longer the champions, and months of hard work and training including sacrificing our Spring break had been in vain.

We wished that the whole day was an April Fools prank played by Mother Nature and Caissa, but it was not to be. ■



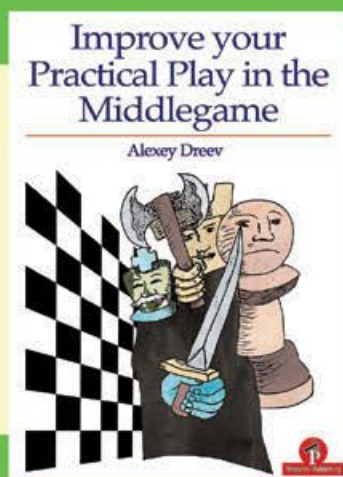


ALWAYS ONE MOVE AHEAD

ALL BOOKS AVAILABLE NOW!

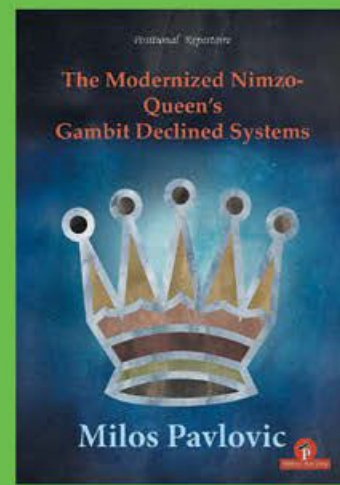
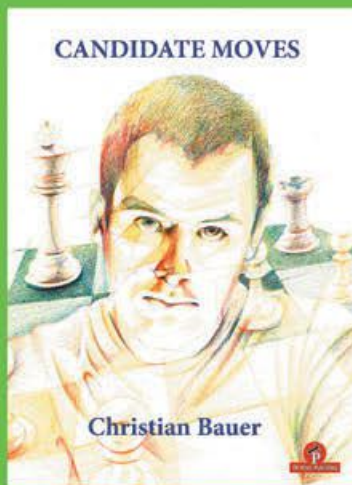
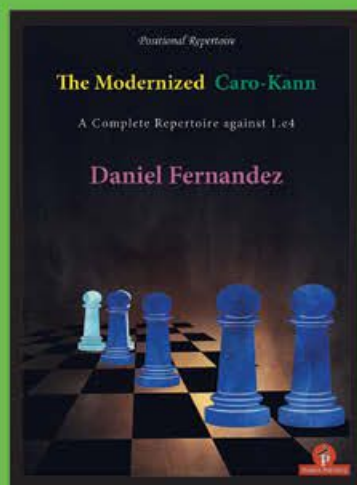


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2018

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Just after the Berlin Candidates, Fabiano Caruana triumphed yet again with a +4 score and clear first place by a whole point ahead of Magnus Carlsen.

# BLACK IS STILL OK!

by GM MACKENZIE MOLNER

I HAVE CHOSEN MY FAVORITE GAMES OF THE TOURNAMENT HELD IN KARLSRUHE AND BADEN BADEN, WHICH, COINCIDENTALLY, THE BLACK PIECES ALL WIN. SO, JUST AS ANDRAS ADORJAN PROCLAIMED: "BLACK IS STILL OK!"

# 2018

has been a year to remember for Fabiano Caruana. His spectacular performance at the Candidates Tournament has been the most covered chess story of the year, and one of the most important moments in American

chess history. He's been showing incredible form and looks to pose a serious threat to Magnus Carlsen later this year in London. The Grenke Chess Classic, which featured both Magnus and Fabiano, was another opportunity for Fabiano to show the world the kind of chess he's been playing. Besides those two players, the field featured two young and talented German GMs, as well as Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Levon Aronian, Hou Yifan, Vishy Anand and several other elite Grandmasters. I have chosen my favorite games of the tournament which, coincidentally, the Black pieces all win. As Andras Adorjan said "Black is still OK!"

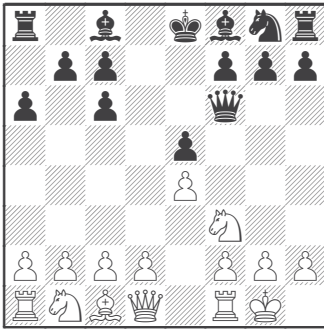
I met Georg Meier at a few tournaments in the US while he was studying here. I watched him first hand play a match against Wesley So to decide who would be the first board for Webster University. Needless to say, their team was quite strong! Georg won the match and made a comment about how he loved the "boring" openings that were being played. I wonder if he was hoping for a similar story here when he chose the Exchange Ruy Lopez with White...

## C68

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Georg Meier     | 2648 |
| Fabiano Caruana | 2784 |

Round 3, Grenke Chess Classic 2018

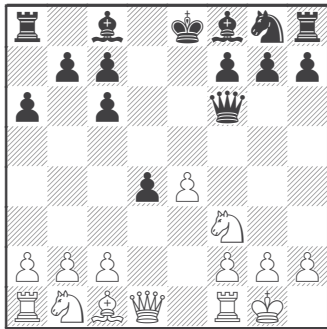
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.0-0 ♖f6!?



An interesting sideline which, after the result of this game, will surely be explored much more in the future.

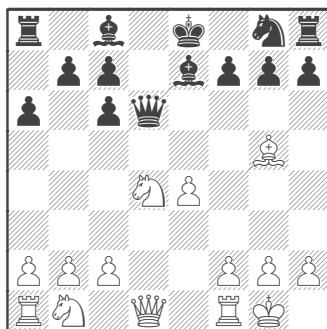
**6.d4** Another way of playing is 6.d3 with chances of taking the game back to the main line. 6...g4 (6...d7 would have possibly avoided mainstream theory.) 7.b2 d7 8.h3 h5 At this point the game has transposed to the most fashionable line of the Exchange Ruy Lopez, when play might continue 9.e1 g6 10.d4 with a standard position.

**6...exd4**



**7.g5** 7...xd4 would be a lackluster approach. Black will have no trouble at least equalizing after 7...xd4 8.dxd4 d7, intending to castle queenside. Play would likely continue 9.e3 0-0-0 10.c3 d7 11.ead1 g6 with good play.

**7...d6 8.dxd4 e7**

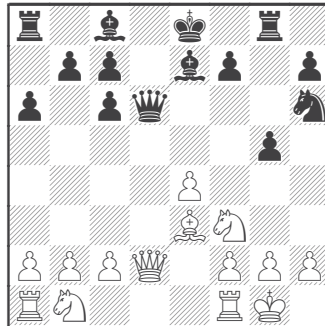


# GRENKE CHESS CLASSIC, Karlsruhe/Baden Baden, Germany, 31 March - 09 April 2018

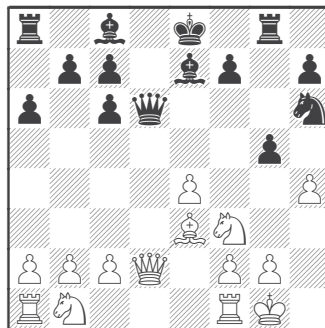
| RK  | NAME                   | ELO  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | PTS |
|-----|------------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-----|
| 1.  | FABIANO CARUANA        | 2784 |   | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | 1  | 6½  |
| 2.  | MAGNUS CARLSEN         | 2843 | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | ½  | 5½  |
| 3.  | MAXIME VACHIER-LAGRAVE | 2789 | 0 | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½  | 5   |
| 4.  | NIKITA VITIUGOV        | 2735 | 0 | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1  | 5   |
| 5.  | LEVON ARONIAN          | 2794 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½  | 5   |
| 6.  | MATTHIAS BLUEBAUM      | 2631 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ |   | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½  | 4½  |
| 7.  | ARKADIJ NAIDITSCH      | 2701 | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | 1  | 3½  |
| 8.  | VISWANATHAN ANAND      | 2776 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ |   | ½ | ½  | 3½  |
| 9.  | HOU YIFAN              | 2654 | ½ | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ |   | ½  | 3½  |
| 10. | GEORG MEIER            | 2648 | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ |    | 3   |

**9.e3** The most ambitious move. If Black can take on e7 with the knight then White has no hope of an advantage, e.g. 9...xe7 dxe7 10.c3 d7 11.b3 xxd1 12.axd1 b6=.

**9...h6 10.d2 g5! 11.f3 g8**

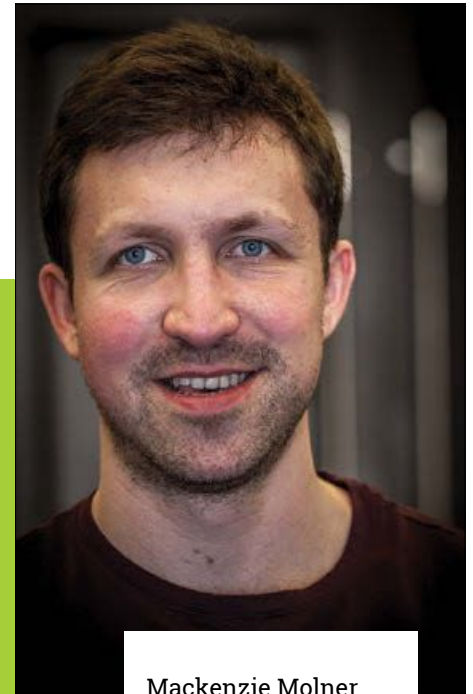


**12.h4?** It's clear that the opening has not been a success for White if he has to play 12...xd6! cxd6= but at this point it is the lesser of two evils. Allowing the queens to remain on the board is asking for trouble.



**12...g6!** A fantastic decision. Black's kingside pressure is irresistible.

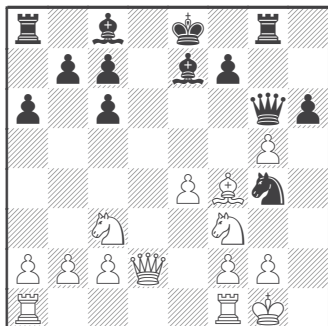
**13.hxg5 d4 14.c3 14.f4! h6**



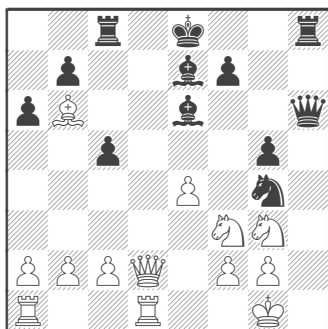
**Mackenzie Molner** is an American grandmaster, residing in New Jersey. He has been US Open Co-Champion and competed in the U.S. Championship. Mac is now a full-time chess coach, teaching school programs, group classes, and private lessons.



15.♙xc7 hxg5 16.♘d4 ♖g7! 17.f3 ♙c5  
18.♗d1∞.  
14...h6! 15.♙f4



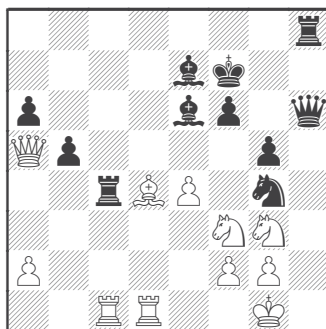
15...♙e6?! 15...hxg5!, immediately opening up the h-file, is critical and would keep Black's initiative alive. After playing through some of the lines with my computer, the most important variation seems to be 16.♙xc7 ♖h8 17.♗fd1 ♙e6 18.♗d4 ♖h6 19.♔f1 ♖c8 20.♙g3 ♗d8 21.♗a4! b5 22.♗xd8+ ♙xd8 23.♗xa6 ♙c4+ 24.♘e2 ♗f6 25.♔e1! ♖h1+ 26.♘fg1 ♗e6 and White can't prevent ...♗xe4 with a devastating attack.  
16.♙xc7 ♖c8 17.♙b6 hxg5 18.♘e2 c5 19.♘g3 ♖h8 20.♗fd1 ♖h6



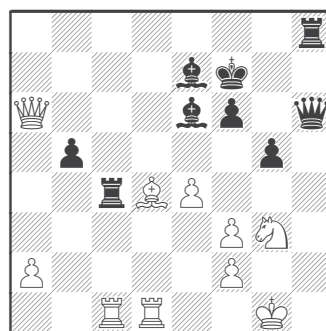
21.b4?? It's hard to blame Meier for feeling he needed to do something drastic to bring his bishop back into play, considering how much pressure he is under on the kingside. However the computer, with nerves of steel, shows there is nothing to fear and proposes a slower regrouping, 21.♙a5, with the defensive idea of meeting 21...♘h2 with 22.♘e1 ♘g4 23.♘f3 and asking Black what else can he muster.  
21...cxb4!-+ 22.♙d4 f6 23.c3 bxc3? 23...♘h2! 24.♘e1 ♙d6 wins.  
24.♙xc3 ♔f7? 25.♗ac1= ♗c4



26.♙d4 b5 27.♗a5

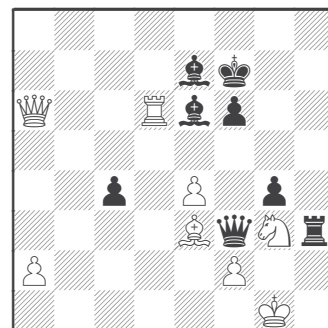


27...♘h2 Best is 27...♙d6! but after 28.e5 ♘xe5 29.♙xe5 g4+ 30.♘g5+ ♗xg5 31.♗xc4 bxc4 32.♗d6 ♗xe5 33.♗xe5 fxe5 34.♘e4 White should hold.  
28.♗xa6?? Correct is 28.♘e1! ♗xc1 (28...♘g4 29.♘f3) 29.♗xc1 ♙g4! 30.♗c7! ♘f1!! 31.♗xe7+ ♔xe7 32.♗c7+ ♔e8= 33.♘f3!∞.  
28...♘xf3+ 29.gxf3



▲ Fabiano Caruana vs. Georg Meier, Grenke Classic 2018, Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden. Photo by Harald Fietz.

29...g4? He should play 29...♗h2+ 30.♔f1 ♗d8 and White's position crumbles.  
30.f4! ♗xf4? 31.♗xc4 bxc4+ 32.♙e3? ♗f3-+ 33.♗d6 ♖h3



34.♗xe6 ♗xg3+ 35.fxg3 ♗xe3+ 36.♔h2 ♗f2+ 37.♔h1 ♗f1+ Facing mate in two moves, White resigned. Not the typical snoozefest you expect to see in an Exchange Ruy!

**White resigned**

With his victory in the following game, Fabiano clinched first place in the tournament.

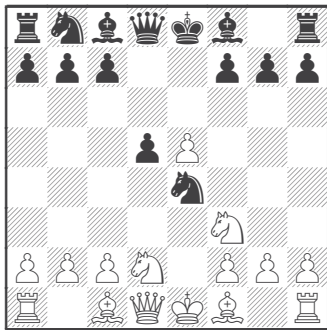
## C43

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Nikita Vitiugov | 2735 |
| Fabiano Caruana | 2784 |

Round 9, Grenke Chess Classic 2018

**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6** Fabiano has made incredible use of this opening lately, adopting it as his main weapon throughout his recent run of impressive results.

**3.d4 ♗xe4 4.dxe5 d5 5.♗bd2**

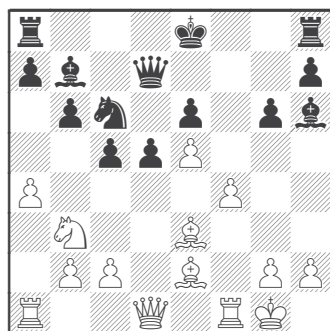


**5...♗d7!?** I imagine this move came as a surprise to Vitiugov. It has almost never been played before and has the obvious point of preventing White from taking on e4 and then capturing on d8, upsetting Black's coordination. Black has several other ways of continuing here: 5...♗xd2 is one approach, while the less popular 5...♗c5!? is also perfectly playable.

**6.♗d3 6.♗xe4 dxe4 7.♗d4** was the best try for an advantage. White will fight to play e5-e6, damaging Black's pawn structure, and then follow up with ♗f1-c4.

**6...♗c5 7.♗e2 g6!?** 7...♗e7 would also be fine.

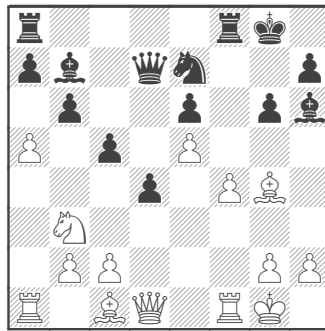
**8.♗b3 ♗e6 9.♗e3 c5 10.♗g5 b6 11.♗xe6 fxe6 12.a4 ♗b7 13.0-0 ♗c6 14.f4 ♗h6**



**15.a5?! 15.♗b5!** is the best way of playing, as it prevents Black's plan of ...♗c6-e7-f5 and prepares White's main idea of a4-a5. If Black meets this with ...a7-a6, White will retreat the bishop and play a4-a5 with greater effect.

**15...♗e7!** Not 15...♗xe5?? 16.♗d4!±.

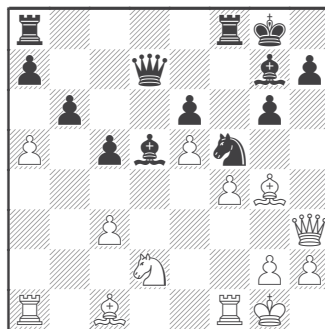
**16.♗g4 d4 17.♗c1 0-0**



**18.♗d3** Well worth considering is 18.c4!?. I have some experience of playing such positions for White and know very well that this kind of structure requires careful thought, because Black can always maintain his central protected passed pawn. However, in the present situation I think it's worthwhile for White to keep control over the d5-square as this will also stop Black's queenside and center pawns rolling down the board.

**18...♗d5! 19.♗h3 ♗g7 20.♗d2 ♗f5 21.c4 dxc3 21...♗c6!?** was a good alternative.

**22.bxc3**



**22...♗ad8** The pawn thrust 22...b5!, generating immediate queenside play, was the way to go. Then 23.♗f3 can be met by 23...b4±.

**23.axb6 23.♗f3**, controlling e4, would have helped White's knight get into the game after, say, 23...b5 24.♗b1 a6 25.♗e4∞.

**23...axb6 24.♗e1 b5 25.♗e4**

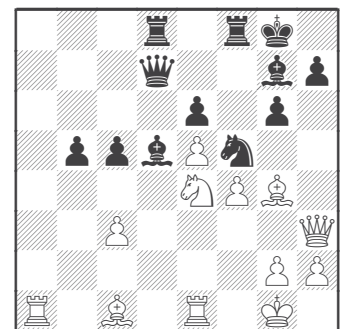


### BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS!

THE BLOG OF  
GRANDMASTER ALEX COLOVIC

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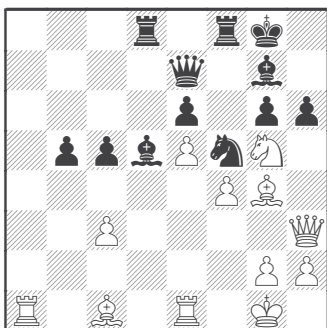


**25...♗e7** The exchange 25...♗xe4! may seem counter-intuitive but it is very strong. White's pieces will be diverted from controlling the a-file and Black can exploit this by launching rapid counterplay after 26.♗xe4 h5± 27.♗e2 (White would definitely not enjoy playing 27.♗xf5 ♗d1+) 27...♗a8!.

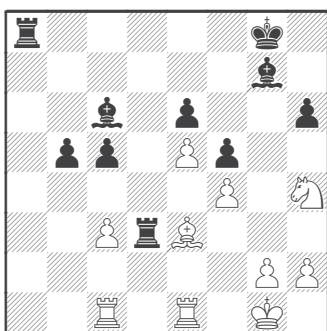


Playing hall,  
Grenke Classic 2018,  
Karlsruhe/  
Baden-Baden.  
Photo by  
Harald Fietz.

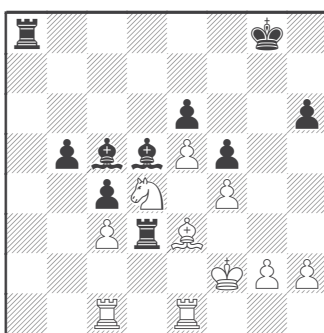
26. ♖g5 h6



27. ♖f3? Correct is 27. ♖e4! – once again, the knight needs to be on this square.  
27... ♗c6 27... ♗a8!  
28. ♗xf5 gxf5 29. ♗e3 ♗d3! 30. ♗ac1 ♗a8! Quickly activating all of Black's pieces.  
31. ♖h4 ♖xh4 32. ♖xh4



32...c4 Best is 32... ♗f8!, improving Black's worst piece and preventing White's best defensive idea, ♗e3-c5.  
33. ♖f2? 33. ♗c5! definitely wouldn't solve White's problems but it would help to slow things down on the queenside.  
33... ♗f8 34. ♖f3 ♗d5? 34... ♗xf3! is better.  
35. ♖d4 ♗c5



36. ♖xf5? A faulty combination. 36. ♖c2! would have held on just a little longer...  
36... ♗a3 37. ♖xh6+ ♖g7 38. f5 ♗xc1 39. ♗xc1 ♗xc3 40. f6+ ♖g6 and White resigned. A nice effort from beginning to end. Fabiano played a new idea in the opening and backed it up with a consistently played middlegame. With games like this he makes me want to play the Petroff and that's something I never thought I would say!

**White resigned**

Back at the very beginning of the tournament – it started with a bang as can be seen from the following game. Matthias Bluebaum is one of the most promising young players from Germany, no doubt a hometown favorite. Nikita Vitiugov, at the age of 31, is already an established elite player but still doesn't seem to get quite the recognition he deserves.

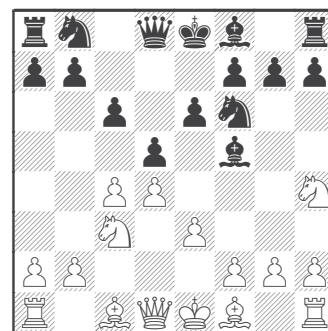
## D12

Matthias Bluebaum 2631

Nikita Vitiugov 2735

Round 1, Grenke Chess Classic 2018

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. ♖f3 ♖f6 4. e3 ♗f5  
5. ♖c3 e6 6. ♖h4



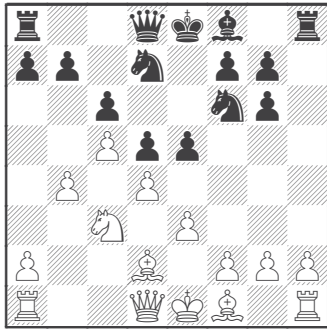


**6...♗g6** Black can also choose 6...♗e4!? endeavoring to create a slight weakening of White's kingside by provoking 7.f3 – and only then playing ...♗g6.

**7.♗d2 ♖bd7 8.♖xg6** Or 8.♗e2 ♗d6 9.♖xg6 hxg6.

**8...hxg6!? 9.c5** Definitely not the most commonly seen move but a good try for an advantage. Other popular moves are 9.g3, 9.♗c2 and 9.♗c1.

**9...e5 10.b4**

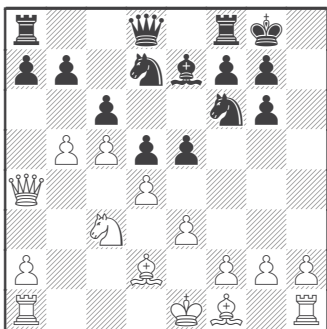


**10...♗e7 10...♗h4!?** is an interesting attempt to ruin White's center, but White has a clever way of meeting this by 11.f4! exd4 12.exd4 ♗e7+! (Other moves fail to contest White's advantage.) 13.♗e2 ♖h5 14.0-0 ♗xe2 15.♖xe2 ♖hf6! 16.♖g1!±, heading for f3, and White's light-squared bishop makes the difference.

**11.b5** White could also consider a slower move such as 11.♗e2, although this is well met by 11...♗c7 with the plan of ...♖f8-e6 to exert further pressure on White's center.

**11...0-0** Black can also consider keeping the king in the center with 11...♖f8, where it will find shelter behind the pawns while keeping the rook active on the open h-file.

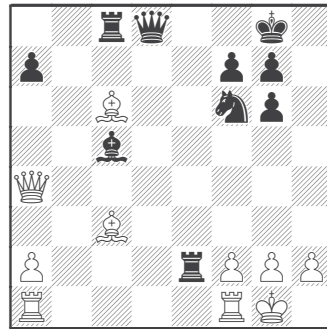
**12.♗a4?** This direct move is a tempting choice but it leads to major problems.



**12...♗e8?** Black misses a chance to deliver a knockout! 12...exd4! 13.exd4 ♗xc5!! 14.dxc5 ♖xc5 15.♗a3 (15.♗c2 d4+!) 15...♗e7+ 16.♖e2 (16.♖d1! cxb5+) 16...cxb5. Materially, Black is even here, but White's coordination and king safety are abysmal.

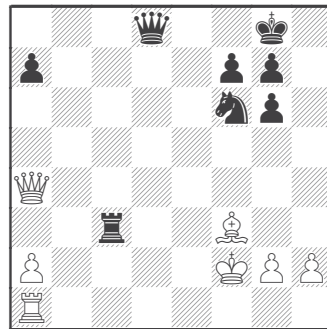
**13.bxc6 bxc6 14.♗e2 exd4 15.exd4 ♖xc5! 16.dxc5 d4 17.0-0 dxc3 18.♗xc3 ♗xc5 19.♗f3 ♗c8 20.♗xc6?** White is in too much of a hurry to regain the lost material. 20.♗ad1 would have provided enough compensation for full equality.

**20...♗e2!** This move shows the drawback of removing the bishop from f3. The rook will be very powerful on the second rank.



**21.♗f3?** The awkward 21.♗e1! would be best, as it overprotects f2 and gives White time to retreat the light-squared bishop to f3. Moving White's dark-squared bishop off the c-file also helps to prevent any unwelcome discovered attacks.

**21...♗xf2! 22.♗xf2 ♗xf2+ 23.♖xf2 ♗xc3**



**24.♗xa7?** After 24.♗d1! ♗c7+ Black would have good winning chances but there is still a lot of work to do.

**24...♖e4+! 25.♖g1** If 25.♗xe4 then 25...♗c7! and White cannot stop the threats of ...♗f6+ or ...♗d4+, picking up

the rook on a1.

**25...♗a3!** A beautiful deflection away from the crucial d4-square.

**White resigned**

When choosing my games for the article, I couldn't resist including a game in which Carlsen adopts my favorite opening, the Najdorf Sicilian, and moreover a specific variation that I have played myself several times.

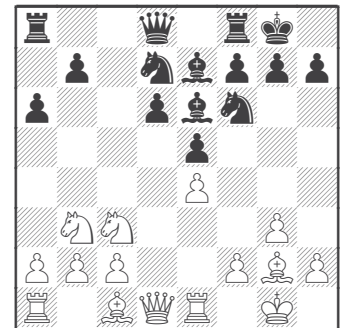
## B91

|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| Arkadij Naiditsch | 2701 |
| Magnus Carlsen    | 2843 |

Round 7, Grenke Chess Classic 2018

**1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 a6 6.g3 e5 7.♖b3 7...♖de2** is another critical move. White's plan will be to complete his kingside development and then play h2-h3, g3-g4, and ♖e2-g3 with kingside and central play.

**7...♗e7 8.♗g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♗e6 10.♗e1 ♖bd7**

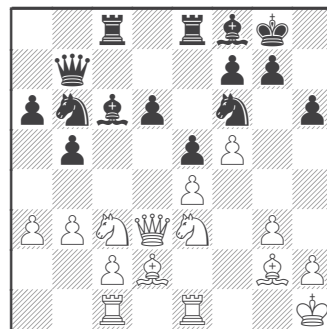


**11.♖d2** This unusual move is actually a standard plan in the present position. White intends ♖d2-f1-e3. If this maneuver is successful, White will be left with a dominating outpost on d5, and Black a passive, lifeless position. However, 11.a4 would be a more normal way to commence this plan, preventing Black from launching queenside play. As a Najdorf player myself, I usually consider it a positional victory if White is forced to fill the d5-square with a pawn. And in this game Carlsen does indeed win the battle for this square, thereby assuring himself the better chances.

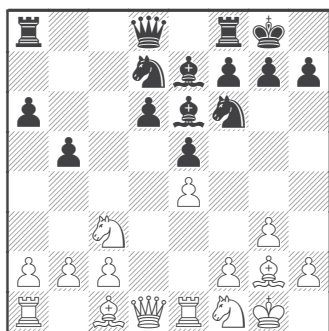
**11...b5 12.♖f1**



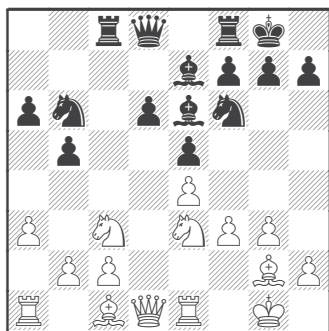
19...h6 20.b3 ♖c6 21.♗d2 ♔c7  
22.♝ac1 ♚b7



23.♘ed5?! It is almost always a concession if White is obliged to play this move when the opponent has such control over the d5 square. The outpost on which White has focussed his pieces will now be closed. Best was 23.♗f3! ♗e7 24.h4 a5! ♚. 23...♗xd5! 24.exd5 ♘bd7 25.♘d1 e4 25...♗e7! is also a good plan, intending ...♗e7-d8-b6 with an impressive harmony of pieces.  
26.♚d4 ♘e5?!



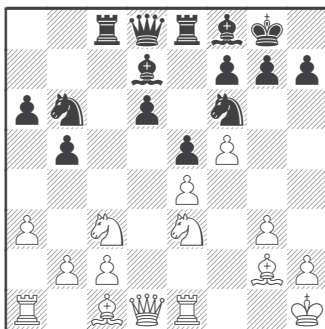
12...♗g4!? This is a nice touch. Black stutter steps in order to weaken White's control of the d5-square. This will allow Black to play ...d6-d5 in some positions.  
13.f3 13.♚d2!? also deserves consideration. Black could reply 13...♘b6. ♚.  
13...♗e6 14.♘e3 ♝c8 15.a3 ♘b6



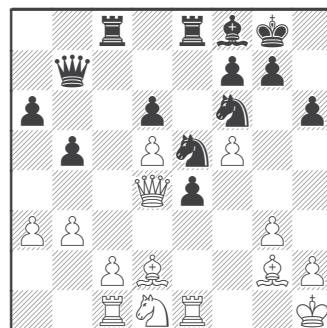
Now Black is ready to win the fight for the d5-square with a timely ...d6-d5. If

▲ Magnus Carlsen, Grenke Classic 2018, Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden.  
Photo by Harald Fietz.

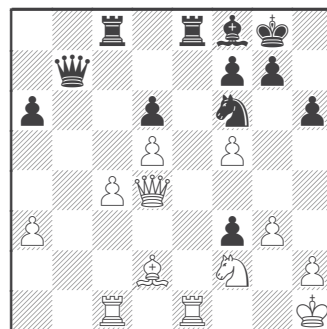
this happens, Black's pieces will come to life and White will be much worse.  
16.f4 Re-opening the diagonal for the g2-bishop, but White risks over-extending himself on the kingside.  
16...♝e8?! Best is 16...exf4! 17.gxf4 ♝e8+ and Black will play ...♗e7-f8 with very strong pressure against White's center.  
17.♘h1 ♗f8 Again, 17...exf4! is at least as strong.  
18.f5 ♗d7



19.♚d3 19.♘g4! would have kept the position balanced. The white knight on e3 is getting in the way of the other pieces and by trading it White also creates some space on the kingside. Now 19...♘g4 20.♚xg4 ♗c6 21.♗e3 leads to an equal game.



27.♘f2? 27.♘c3! is the best way of applying pressure on e4.  
27...♘f3! This move is crushing! Black now achieves positional domination.  
28.♗xf3 exf3 29.c4 bxc4 30.bxc4

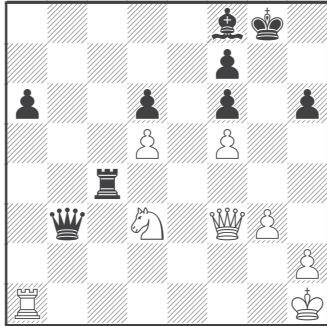


30...♝e5 Best is 30...♝xe1+!, disturbing



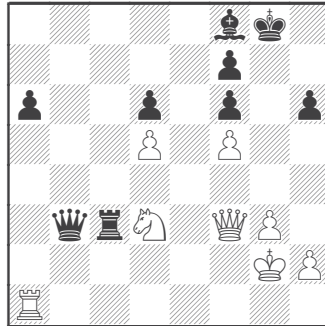
White's setup. If then 31.♖xe1, Black would reply ...♗b3 winning material after 31.♗xe1 ♜xd5 32.♗e4 ♖c6 33.♗xf3 ♜e3!.

31.♗e3 ♗xe3 32.♗xe3 ♗b2! 33.♜d3 ♗xa3 34.♗xf3 ♗a2 35.♗c3 ♗xc4 36.♗a1 ♗b3 37.♗xf6 gxf6



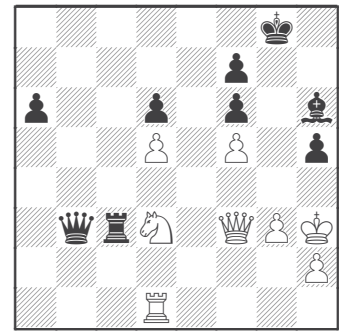
38.♜g2? White needs to take the opportunity to break the pin while he still can, so 38.♗d1! ♗xd1+? (38...♗b7?)

39.♗xd1= is better.  
38...♗c3



39.♗d1? This is the absolutely last chance to break the pin. Although Black is still winning after 39.♗g4+ ♜h7 40.♜f2 ♗xd5+, the game continuation leaves White in a hopeless state.

39...h5! Killing any potential checks and opening up the h6-square for the bishop.  
40.♜h3 ♗h6



A beautiful position. White is in zugzwang. There is no way to untangle without losing material.

41.♗e1 ♗xd3 42.♗xh5 ♗e3 and White threw in the towel. Carlsen equalized without any problems and maintained pressure throughout the game. A game from which I certainly learned something! Carlsen finished in second place behind Caruana with a +2 score.

**White resigned** ■

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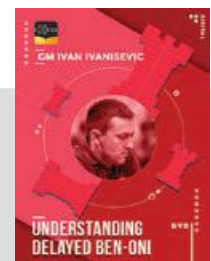
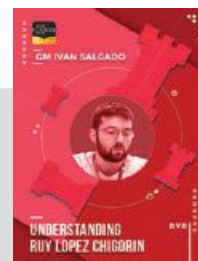
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## CHESS IMPROVEMENT WITH SUSAN POLGAR

Greetings! It is a pleasure for me to be a contributor to American Chess Magazine. My column will be about chess improvement. Articles can vary from game analysis to specific chess advice. If you have questions, please feel free to write me at [SusanPolgar@aol.com](mailto:SusanPolgar@aol.com). I may select various questions to include in future articles. You can also check out my free chess news website [www.ChessDailyNews.com](http://www.ChessDailyNews.com) where I update the readers daily with various chess news, puzzles, chess improvement tips and much more. I will also offer previews of my upcoming articles with American Chess Magazine! Enjoy!



# Warm-Up: Carlsen-Caruana

by GM SUSAN POLGAR

### C24

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Magnus Carlsen  | 2843 |
| Fabiano Caruana | 2822 |

Round 1, Norway Chess, Stavanger 2018

Ever since the winner of the Candidates tournament in Berlin was determined, the chess world has been watching with great curiosity all subsequent encounters between the World Champion and his forthcoming Challenger. Prior to a major event like the World Championship, these games will carry extra weight for both players. Whether consciously or

not, the two protagonists will usually try to gain some psychological edge for the impending “big match” – as it is there that it will count most.

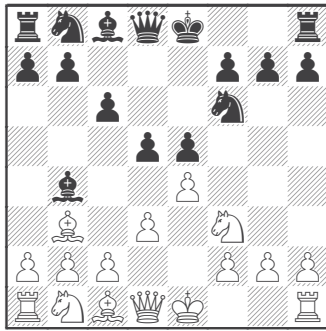
**1.e4** Magnus’ most favored opening move, although he is just as comfortable with the other main alternatives: 1.d4, 1.c4 or 1.♘f3. I view it as a major change in the past couple of decades that nowadays most of the top players can interchangeably and unpredictably vary their starting moves. In older days, most GMs used to play exclusively either 1.e4 or 1.d4 (often in conjunction with the 1.♘f3 move order).

**1...e5** Fabiano’s main weapon. Lately he

has brought the Petroff back into fashion. **2.♗c4** Magnus chose to avoid the Petroff this time, perhaps postponing that challenge to their match in November.

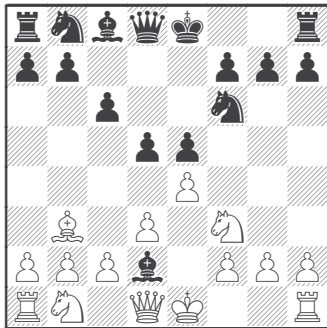
**2...♘f6 3.d3 c6** The last time Fabiano faced this position, against Naiditsch in Baden-Baden 2017, he continued 3...♘c6 4.♘c3 ♘a5. But Magnus would surely have had some improvement on that game up his sleeve. Apparently Fabiano was not keen to find out what that might be and so preferred a different way.

**4.♘f3 d5 5.♗b3 ♗b4+** Black is trying to provoke c2-c3, to take away the c3 square from White’s knight. 5...♗d6 was the old main move.



**6...d2** This is a departure from their previous encounter at the Sinquefeld Cup four years ago. There Carlsen tried 6.c3 d6 7.g5 dxe4 8.dxe4 h6 9.h4 e7 10.bbd2 bbd7 and got nothing out of the opening. In fact after later mistakes he even went on to lose. M.Carlsen 2877 - F.Caruaana 2801, Saint Louis 2014.

**6...xd2+** Fabiano is no stranger to this position from the white side either: 6...d6 7.d3 dxe4 8.g5 0-0 9.dxe4 e7 10.h4 bbd7 11.f3 e8 12.0-0 a5 13.a3 d5 14.ee1 h6 15.dg3 a6 16.f5 f6 17.e6 dc5 18.dexg7 dxb3+ 19.cxb3 g6 20.h3 xf5 21.xf5 h7 22.g3 f7 23.dxb6 1-0 F.Caruaana 2817 - V.Akobian 2645, chess.com international 2017.



**7.dxd2** Also 7.fxd2 is an interesting alternative: 7...a5 (if 7...dxe4 8.dxe5 0-0 9.dxe4 e7 10.f4) 8.d3 d4 9.e2 e7 10.a4 0-0 11.0-0 c5 12.dg3 dc6 13.c4 e8 14.c3 g4 15.e1 e6 16.d5 dc7 17.xc6 bxc6 18.c1 dd7 19.f4 and White had a nice advantage in F.Caruaana 2813 - P.Tregubov 2586, Germany 2017.

**7...a5** Other commonly played developments are 7...bd7 or 7...g4. But until now Black had really good results with the text move.

**8.c3** After 8.a3 a4 9.a2 bd7 10.0-0 0-0 11.e1 e8 Black has been just fine

Susan Polgar is an Olympic and World Chess Champion, a top-notch coach, prolific writer and savvy promoter.

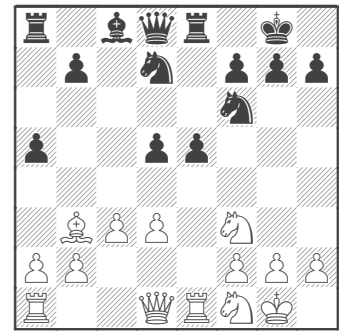
Some of the notable achievements in her chess career include: Being the first woman in history to earn the Grandmaster title, becoming the #1 ranked female player at 15, and remaining in the top 3 for 25 years, being the first in history, male or female, to win the Chess Triple Crown (World Blitz, Rapid, Classical World Championships), as well as winning 10 Olympiad medals (5 gold, 4 silver, 1 bronze)

while recording a record 56 consecutive game scoring streak without a loss on board 1. Since retiring from chess competition, she became one of the top chess coaches in the world, leading her SPICE chess program to an unprecedented 7 consecutive Collegiate Division I Final Four Championships. She also founded the Susan Polgar Foundation which has awarded more than \$5 million in chess prizes/scholarships to young players, and

[www.ChessDailyNews.com](http://www.ChessDailyNews.com), one of the most popular personal chess websites in the world.

in a number of games.

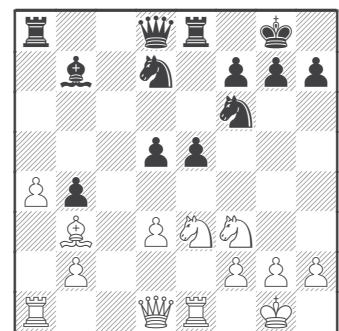
**8...bd7 9.exd5 cxd5 10.0-0 0-0 11.e1 e8 12.f1** After 12.a4 e7 13.xd7 dxd7 14.c4 d4 looks very pleasant for Black, as was played in the game L.Cooper 2317 - T.Banusz 2563, Warsaw 2011.



**12...b5!?** This is the first move out of book (at least according to my database) but not necessarily an improvement on the earlier try 12...c7. I always pay special attention and respect to email or correspondence games as in these both sides have an ample amount of time to try to come up with the best moves and game plans. For example, 12...c7 13.e3 b6 14.a4 g4 15.dxc4 dxc4 16.h3 f6 17.c1 ad8 18.c2 bd7 19.cce2 e4 20.d4 dc5 21.c2 g6 led to a balanced position and an eventual draw in M.Pirs 2552 - M.Akdag 2535, ICCF email 2011.

**13.a4 b4** After 13...bxa4 14.xa4 White would have a nice pin (on the knight on d7) as well as a potential target (the a5 pawn).

**14.cxb4 axb4 15.e3 b7**



A critical moment has arisen where White needs to decide in which direction to take the game.

**16.d4** Practically speaking, this is perhaps the best bet. Another interesting idea is 16.f5 b6 17.d2, trying to develop a kingside attack, but Black seems to be okay after 17...h6. On the other hand, 16.d2? would have been an outright mistake, as after 16...dc5 17.bxb4 dxd3 18.bxb7 b8 Black gains a material advantage.

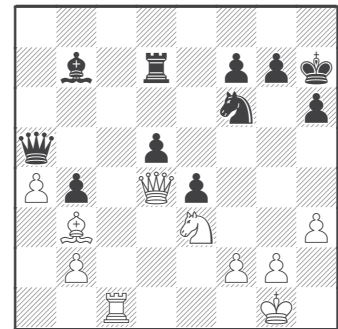
**16...e4 17.d5!** This is a positional pawn sacrifice to achieve a blockade -



◀ Magnus Carlsen vs. Fabiano Caruana, Norway Chess, Stavanger 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

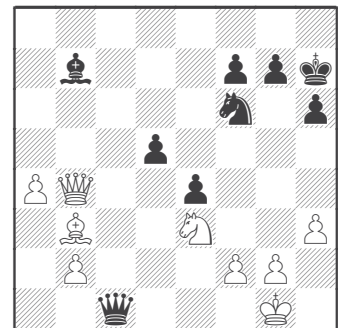
off the diagonal of the white bishop, just in case.

25.♖c1



25...♜c7? Perhaps this move comes from a loss of patience. Black returns the extra pawn, but not under the best circumstances. 25...♞a6 was necessary, when White would be advised not to take the pawn, 26.♞xb4?!, because of 26...d4. But if White cannot capture the pawn, it is not clear how (and if) he can make progress.

26.♜xc7 ♞xc7 27.♞xb4 White has won the pawn back while not allowing the ...d5-d4 pawn advance, which is crucial. 27...♞c1+ If Black tries to prepare ...d5-d4 with 27...♞d7, then the queen would return to its blocking square by 28.♞d4 and focus on assisting the advance of the two connected passed pawns on the queenside.



28.♙d1 Generally, I am not a fan of voluntarily stepping into a pin, but in this particular case there is nothing Black can do to exploit it. 28.♙h2 ♞c7+ 29.g3 is a reasonable option too, and if 29...h5 30.♙g2 h4 then 31.g4.

28...♙a6 29.♞d4 ♙e2 30.♙h2 ♙xd1

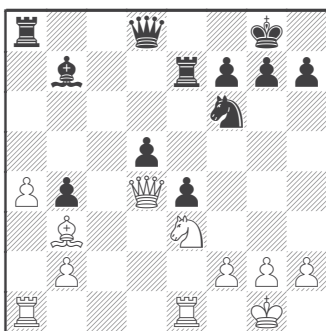
NORWAY CHESS, Stavanger, Norway, May 27-Jun 6, 2018

| RK | NAME                   | RTG  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | PTS |
|----|------------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1  | FABIANO CARUANA        | 2822 |   | 0 | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 5   |
| 2  | MAGNUS CARLSEN         | 2843 | 1 |   | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 4½  |
| 3  | HIKARU NAKAMURA        | 2769 | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 4½  |
| 4  | VISWANATHAN ANAND      | 2760 | 0 | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 4½  |
| 5  | WESLEY SO              | 2778 | 0 | 1 | ½ | ½ |   | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 4   |
| 6  | LEVON ARONIAN          | 2764 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ |   | 1 | ½ | ½ | 4   |
| 7  | SHAKHRIYAR MAMEDYAROV  | 2808 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 |   | ½ | ½ | 3½  |
| 8  | MAXIME VACHIER-LAGRAVE | 2789 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ |   | 0 | 3   |
| 9  | SERGEY KARJAKIN        | 2782 | 0 | ½ | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 |   | 3   |
| 10 | DING LIREN             | 2791 | - | - | ½ | ½ | - | - | - | ½ | - | 0   |

which I think Nimzowitsch would have been proud to see!

17...♙xe5 18.dxe5 ♜xe5 19.♞d4 White has given up a pawn to take the initiative and create a picturesque blockade on the dark e3 and d4 squares. It is debatable whether White is actually better, but clearly he has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

19...♜e7



20.♜ac1 The World Champion is in no rush to win back the sacrificed pawn, and rightly so.

After 20.♞xb4 the natural-looking and direct 20...d4 is not the best option because of 21.♙f5 ♜d7 22.♙xd4 and White seems to emerge with a slight advantage after the ensuing complications: 22...♙g4! (22...♜xd4? 23.♞xb7 and the f7 pawn is hanging, leaving Black in trouble) 23.h3 ♙e5 (23...♙xf2 24.♙xf2 ♞f6+ 25.♙g1 ♞xd4+ 26.♞xd4 ♜xd4 27.♙f1 ♙d5 28.♙xd5 ♜xd5 29.b4) 24.♙e6! fxe6 (24...♞f6 25.♙c5 ♙d3 26.♙xd3 exd3 27.♜e3) 25.♙xe6+ ♙h8 26.♙xd7 ♞xd7 27.♜xe4 ♙xe4 28.♞xe4 ♜e8 29.a5.

However, the somewhat surprising 20...♞b8! 21.♞d4 ♙a8 22.♙a2 ♜eb7 23.♙xd5 ♙h8! gives Black enough counterplay.

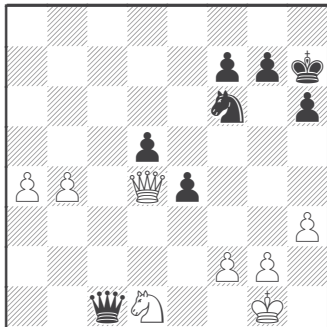
20...♙d7 21.♜ed1 h6 22.♜c5 ♜a5 23.♜xa5 ♞xa5 24.h3 Despite the fact that Black is a pawn up, it is White who has the easier game. White has a perfect blockade on the dark squares, whereas the black pieces are busy protecting the weak b4 and d5 pawns.

24...♙h7 This is a waiting move to get





If 30...♖c7+, then 31.g3.  
 31.♜xd1 ♖c7+ 32.♔g1 ♖c1 33.b4  
 And the pawns are on their way!



**33...e3** This pawn sacrifice does not really help, but it is Black's only hope of counterplay.

**34.fxe3 ♜e4 35.♖xd5** White is two healthy pawns ahead but, due to the pin along the first rank, things are not quite as simple as they might seem. White would not achieve anything with 35.♔h2 ♖c7+ 36.♔g1 ♖c1.

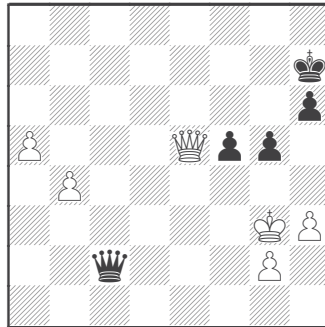
**35...♜d2** The idea is to try to disconnect the white queen and knight. 35...♜c3 fails to 36.♖d3+.

**36.♖f5+** Another good option was 36.♖d3+ ♔g8 37.♖e2 with similar ideas as in the game.

**36...♔h8 37.♖g4 f5 38.♖e2 ♜e4 39.♖e1!** This is an important defensive move which stops the threatened ...♜c3. Moving out of the pin by 39.♔h2 would not lead to any progress, because after 39...♖c7+ 40.♔g1 ♖c1 we would be just back to the same position as two moves previously.

**39...♖a1 40.a5 ♜d6 41.♖d2 ♜c4 42.♖d4 ♖c1 43.♔f1** Magnus

voluntarily changes the dynamic of the game by returning a pawn to get rid of the knights. Also 43.♔f2 ♖c2+ 44.♔e1 ♖b3 45.a6 ♖xb4+ 46.♜c3 worked.  
**43...♜xe3+ 44.♖xe3 ♖xd1+ 45.♔f2 ♖c2+ 46.♔g3** Stepping back to the first rank was not a good idea as it would lose a pawn after 46.♔g1? ♖b1+.  
**46...g5 47.♖e5+ ♔h7**

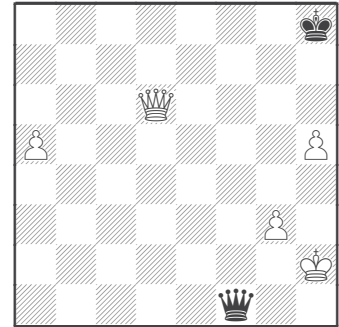


**48.♔h2** A very practical and human move to avoid the complications after 48.b5 f4+ 49.♔f3 (49.♔h2? f3 50.♖g3 f2) 49...♖d1+, although with precise play, 50.♖e2 ♖b3+ 51.♔g4, White would also prevail.

**48...f4 49.♖d5!** Again, it was important not to allow Black to exploit the pin by pushing ...f4-f3 as would be the case after 49.b5? f3.

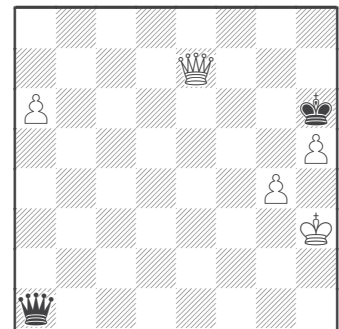
**49...♖a4 50.♖f7+ ♔h8 51.♖g6** The most accurate continuation was 51.♖f6+ ♔h7 52.a6 ♖xb4 53.a7 ♖a3 54.♖f7+ ♔h8 55.♖e8+ ♔g7 56.a8♖. But of course the game move does not spoil anything either.  
**51...♖xb4 52.♖xh6+ ♔g8 53.♖xg5+ ♔h7 54.♖h5+ ♔g7 55.♖g5+ ♔h7 56.h4 ♖d6 57.♖h5+ ♔g7 58.♖g5+**

**♔h7 59.h5 f3+ 60.g3 f2 61.♖g6+ ♔h8 62.♖xd6 f1♖**



Now White is up three pawns so the rest is easy, as long as White doesn't fall for a stalemate trap.

**63.♖h6+ ♔g8 64.♖e6+ ♔h8 65.♖e3 ♖b5 66.♖c3+ ♔h7 67.g4 ♖d5 68.♖c7+ ♔g8 69.♔g3 ♖e6 70.♖d8+ ♔h7 71.♖d3+ ♔h8 72.a6 ♖e5+ 73.♔h3 ♖a1 74.♖d8+ ♔h7 75.♖e7+ ♔h6**



**76.♖e3+** It was not too late to blunder... If 76.a7?? ♖f1+ 77.♔g3 ♖f2+! and Black escapes thanks to stalemate.

**76...♔h7 77.a7 Black resigned** ■

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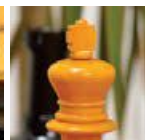
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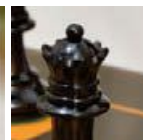
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I HAD NO IDEA WHAT KIND OF OPENING MY SYMPATHETIC OPPONENT WOULD CHOOSE IN RESPONSE TO MY ADVANCE OF THE KING'S PAWN ON THE FIRST MOVE AND I HAD NO INCLINATION TO LOOK IN THE DATABASE...

Photo by Lennart Ootes

# The Chivalrous Knight

by GM VASSILY IVANCHUK

## C07

|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| Vassily Ivanchuk | 2726 |
| Tingjie Lei      | 2531 |

Gibraltar Masters 2018

**1.e4!** This strong move was the point where all my preparations before the game had actually ended. You see, in

the previous round I had somehow played very indifferently as Black and lost against Gupta from India – and so, during the break between these two games, I felt that I was clearly not up to playing chess!

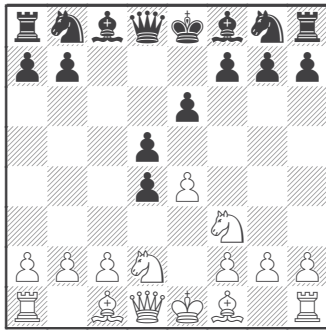
**1...e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2!?** The move 3.♘c3 seemed to me to be too aggressive for this game and, for

some reason, I didn't want to close the center with 3.e5.

**3...c5!** Played in strictly classical fashion! 3...♙e7 or 3...♘c6 4.♘gf3 ♘f6 5.e5 ♘d7 are the kind of continuations where Black invites his opponent to engage in a less explored and more intense struggle.

**4.♘gf3** I had the feeling that 4.exd5 would have been met by 4...♙xd5 instead of 4...exd5. Black's reply to my knight move eventually convinced me that my intuition was right.

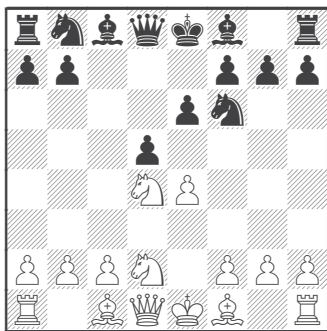
**4...cxd4** If Black wants to play with an isolated queen's pawn, the choice would usually be 4...♘c6 5.exd5 exd5 6.♙b5 ♙d6, or 4...♘f6 5.exd5 exd5 6.♙b5+ ♙d7.



**5...d4** Topalov chose exactly the same move in his match against Kamsky, primarily to avoid his opponent's pre-match preparation.

Far more frequently played is 5.exd5 ♖xd5 6.♗c4 and although in earlier times Black almost automatically replied with 6...♗d6, recently, largely thanks to the efforts of Russian grandmaster Igor Lysyj, 6...♗d7 and 6...♗d8 have become no less popular and even gained respect from a theoretical perspective.

**5...♗f6** It is possible to play like this, however Kamsky chose 5...♗c6 6.♗b5 ♗d7 7.♗xc6 ♗xc6 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.c4 ♗d6 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.exd5 exd5 12.0-0 ♗e7 V.Topalov 2796 - G.Kamsky 2725, Sofia 2009.



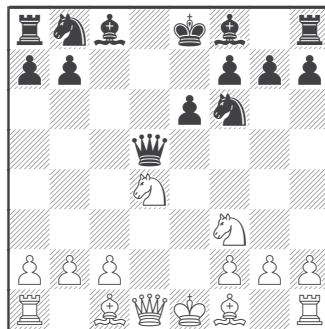
**6...exd5** This is virtually forced. After 6.e5 ♗fd7 White cannot strengthen his pawn center with 7.f4? in view of the simple tactic 7...♗xe5!. However, the plan starting with 7.♗2f3! intends to make use of White's good piece development. I remember that Mark Tseitlin treated this line in exactly the same fashion and with great success.

**6...♗xd5** Black's play is very principled! If 6...♗xd5 then after 7.♗2f3 White has far easier play. There is also the cunning move 6...a6!? but somehow it does not

quite fit in with my ideas and views on present day chess, let alone women's chess! Please bear in mind that I'm writing this just before March 8<sup>th</sup>, and I wish to sincerely congratulate all women chess players on this day of celebration!

**7.♗2f3!?** Ah, how I wished I did not have to compete against a nice young lady in this particular and perhaps computer inspired line!

Of course I recalled that White should play 7.♗b5 ♗a6 8.♗c3 ♗d8 9.a3 ♗e7 10.♗f3, but I was motivated by the desire to conjure up something of my own and preferably as early in the game as possible. The move I played is objectively not the strongest, but to me it seemed solid enough to at least not quickly fall into some dubious position.



**7...♗e7** In chess, sometimes it is quite difficult to determine the moment where you have to make a special effort and find the strongest move, or where you can just choose one of a number of completely sound possibilities. It seemed my opponent's preparation had already ended as she now began to ponder a long time over each of her moves. Her choice is quite good, but not indisputable.

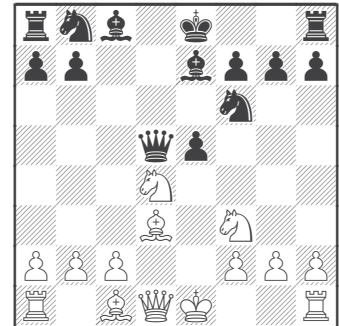
If Black wanted to develop the bishop on d6, then it was now worth playing her pawn to a6 as 7...♗d6?! 8.♗b5! ♗xd1+ 9.♗xd1 ♗e7 10.♗xd6 is clearly in White's favor.

Given that White's intention is to play 8.♗d3 followed by 0-0, it was possible for Black to meet this plan with 7...♗c5, since after 8.♗d3?! ♗xd4 9.♗xd4 ♗xg2 10.♗f3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 White does not seem to have enough compensation for the pawn. So White would have had to develop his bishop in a more modest fashion by 8.♗e2 and after 8...0-0 9.0-0 a6 (or 9...♗d8) Black's position looks

very solid and pretty active.

There was also the variation 7...♗c6 8.♗xc6 ♗xc6 (8...♗xd1+ 9.♗xd1 bxc6 10.♗d3) 9.♗d3, but a single game, of course, could not possibly answer all subsequent questions that might then arise.

**8.♗d3 e5**

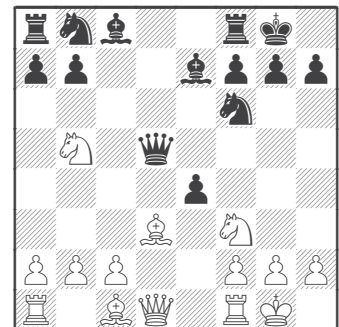


This is exactly what I wanted to provoke! Now the position requires quite a lot of calculation from both players.

Of course, if Black wanted to just get a reliable position then she could have played 8...0-0 9.0-0 a6 (or 9...♗bd7 but 9...e5?! 10.♗f5! ♗c5 11.c4 ♗e6 already looks rather risky for Black.). But Lei Tingjie wanted to create specific threats.

**9.♗b5** The knight jump to f5 is dangerous. In addition to a simple exchange with the transition to an endgame, also the fork ...e5-e4 must be taken into account when I did not see anything worthwhile in reply.

**9...0-0 10.0-0 e4**



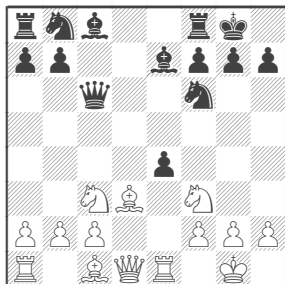
**11.♗c3!** In similar situations, computer engines sometimes suggest going with the knight to c7 and then even trying to prove it is good. However, humans do not even want to look in that direction!





**11...♖c6** This is all forced. Of course it would be wrong for Black to play **11...♖f5?** due to **12.♘xe4! ♘xe4 13.♖e2**.

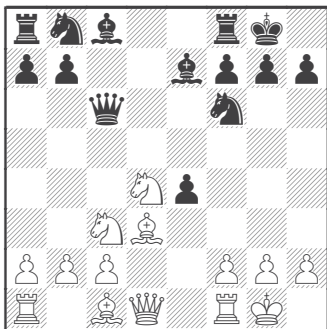
**12.♘d4** But here there is already a choice! Apart from the game move, I also calculated **12.♖e1**.



Then **12...♙b4!?** (I don't even know why I paid much less attention, for example, to the variation **12...exd3 13.♖xe7 dxc2 14.♖xc2 ♘d5 15.♘g5 g6**. Also interesting is **12...♗d8**.)

Unfortunately the attempt to play "beautifully" does not work: **13.♙xe4? ♘xe4 14.♘d5** (If **14.♘e5**, then after **14...♖e6 15.♖xe4 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 f6** wins a piece for Black.) **14...♙xe1** (or **14...♗d8**) **15.♘e7+ ♗h8 16.♘xc6 ♙xf2+** and Black wins.

That's why White needs to take with the rook first: **13.♖xe4! ♘xe4** (**13...♙xc3?** fails to **14.♖c4!**) **14.♙xe4** (or **14.♘xe4**). All the above-mentioned variations are very interesting, but during the game the knight move I eventually played was more to my liking.



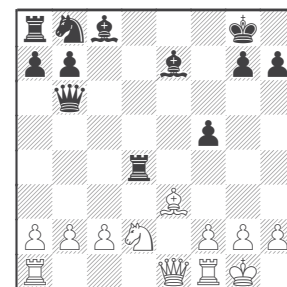
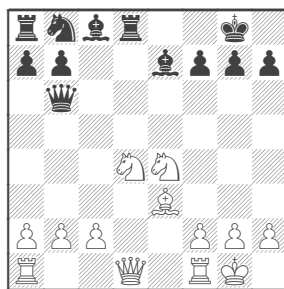
**12...♖b6 13.♙xe4 ♗d8 14.♙e3 ♖xb2?!** Captures and checks are usually the first and foremost consideration for any chess player (Of course not **14...♙c5?** because of **15.♘a4!**), so while my opponent was deep in thought, prior to making her move, I was also



◀ Tingjie Lei, Asian Championship 2017.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

**16...♖xb2** then **17.♖e2** is in White's favor, while **16...f4** is strongly met by **17.♘f5!** **17.♖e1!!**

looking at an immediate trade of pieces on e4: **14...♘xe4 15.♘xe4**.



...creating two very serious threats: **18.c3** and also **18.♙xd4 ♖xd4 19.♖xe7**. Unfortunately Black is unable to parry both these threats at the same time.

I was far less worried about **15...♘c6!?** **16.♘xc6 ♖xc6 17.♘d2** although here Black has enough compensation for a pawn.

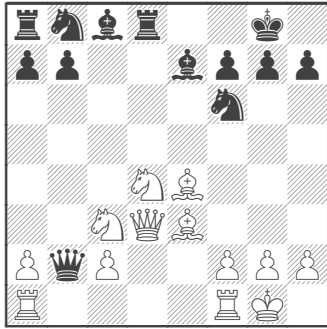
Then I looked at the alternative **15...♖xb2!?** and analyzed **16.♖d3** as one of the main lines (Perhaps **16.♖f3!?** **♘c6 17.c3!** is more aggressive, although after **17...♖a3!?** Black can count on full equality.). Nevertheless, after **16...♘c6 17.♖fb1 ♖a3 18.♖xa3 ♙xa3 19.♘xc6 bxc6**, I assessed the position as roughly equal.

And I began to worry about what to do after **15...f5?**

After all, the knight is under attack, and if it retreats then **...f5-f4** has to be taken into account. I started by checking the simple capture **16.♘xf5 ♙xf5 17.♙xb6 ♖xd1 18.♖fxd1 axb6 19.c3!?** **♙xe4 20.♖e1 ♖a4 21.b3 ♖a3 22.♖xe4 ♘c6** and I didn't quite like this endgame. However, after **23.♖e2! ♙f6 24.♖c1** White does not seem to be doing badly at all.

But then I discovered a far more beautiful idea: **16.♘d2! ♖xd4** (If

15. ♖d3

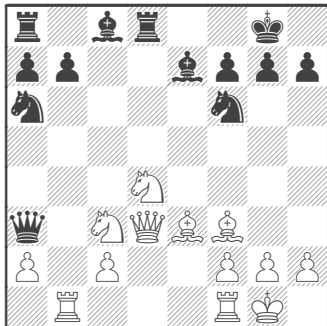


I was already aiming for this particular position when I played 8. ♖d3. Although my pieces would be rather loosely placed, my advantage in development gave me cause for optimism in the upcoming complications.

15... ♖a6 Here Black cannot really take the bishop on e4 as after recapturing with the queen I would be able to create very dangerous threats.

16. ♖ab1 I didn't like the immediate bishop retreat 16. ♖f3 because of 16... ♖b4 17. ♖c4 ♖xc2 18. ♖xc2 ♖xc2 when I was unable to find anything promising for White.

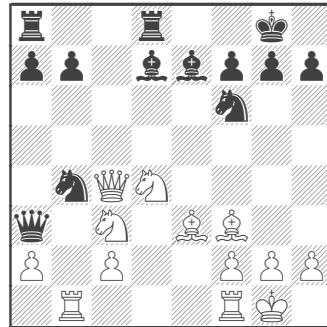
16... ♖a3 17. ♖f3



17... ♖b4?! During the game I was more afraid of 17... ♖b4! (Both 17... ♖c5 18. ♖c4 and 17... ♖g4 18. ♖xb7 ♖c5 19. ♖c4 ♖xb7 20. ♖xb7 ♖ac8 21. ♖c6 led to positions I quite like for White!) Upon 18. ♖b3 (18. ♖cb5 yields no dividends for White after 18... ♖xd3 19. cxd3 ♖d5 with an equal position. Instead, White could try 18. ♖e4 ♖xd3 19. ♖xf6+ gxf6 20. cxd3 ♖c5 21. ♖c2 ♖xd3 22. ♖xb7 ♖xb7 23. ♖xb7 but this too looks pretty drawish.) 18... ♖c5 19. ♖xa3 ♖xd3

20. ♖a4!? (Black should be quite okay after 20. ♖b3 ♖xc3 21. ♖xc3 ♖e5 22. ♖e2 ♖d5.) 20... ♖xc3 21. cxd3 ♖d7 22. ♖a3 would be pleasant for White.

18. ♖c4 ♖d7

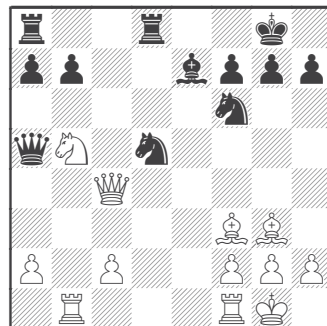


19. ♖cb5 I was very attracted to the idea of rerouting my bishop to c7, but just could not work out which of my knights should go to b5. The line 19. ♖db5 ♖a5 20. ♖f4 ♖e6? 21. ♖c7! is also clearly in White's favor but given that the black rook clearly intends to come to c8 it seemed more desirable to turn left with the c3-knight.

19... ♖a5 19... ♖a4? 20. c3? ♖ac8 might have pleased Black, but more unpleasant was 20. ♖xb7! ♖ab8 21. ♖c6! ♖xc6 22. ♖xc6.

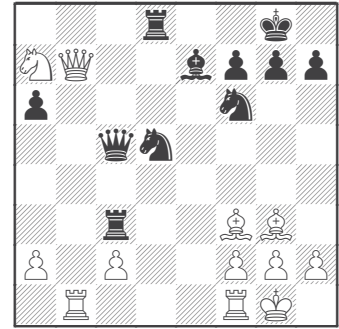
20. ♖f4! ♖xb5 It is clear that White was preparing to cut off the rook on c8 by ♖c7.

21. ♖xb5 ♖bd5 22. ♖g3



The game has now taken definite shape! Two bishops in the open position promise White a clear advantage, and, besides, my opponent was in severe time trouble. 22... ♖ac8 23. ♖b3 a6 Black could have put up more resistance by playing 23... ♖d7 24. ♖fd1 ♖cd8.

24. ♖a7 ♖c3 25. ♖xb7 ♖c5

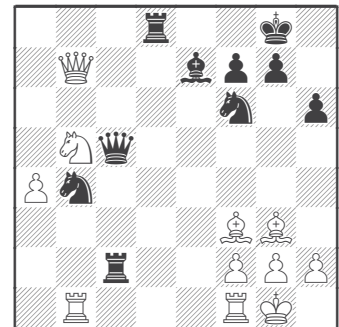


26. a4 Of course, it was not possible to take immediately on a6 because of ... ♖a3!.

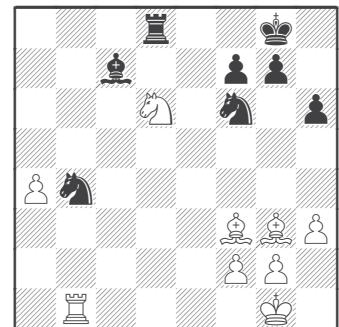
26... h6 26... ♖d6 seemed more accurate to me, as Black should try to trade a pair of bishops.

27. ♖xa6 ♖xc2 Upon 27... ♖a8 White had a pleasant choice between 28. ♖b7!? and 28. ♖b8+ ♖xb8 29. ♖xb8.

28. ♖b5 ♖b4 29. ♖b7



29... ♖d7 30. ♖b8+ ♖d8 31. ♖c7 ♖c8 32. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 33. ♖d6 ♖f8 34. ♖fc1 ♖xc1+ 35. ♖xc1 ♖b6 36. h3 ♖d8 37. ♖b1 ♖c7



38. ♖b7

Black resigned

# Beyond the BERLIN Wall

JUST LIKE ANY HUMBLE CHESS TOURIST, JACOB AAGAARD SLIPPED UNNOTICED BY THE NON CHESS-SAVVY STAFF INTO THE DIMLY LIT AVANT-GARDE VENUE OF THE BERLIN CANDIDATES. BUT WHILE PETER SVIDLER AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE BROADCASTING ONLINE COMMENTARY TO THE WORLD, THE LOW PROFILE DANISH GRANDMASTER WAS QUIETLY LOOKING MORE DEEPLY INTO THE GAMES AND WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON BEHIND THE PROMOTIONAL HYPE...

by **GM JACOB AAGAARD** ||||||||||||||||||

**F**or previous cycles, FIDE has been outsourcing the World Championship to Agon Limited, a company originally owned by Andrew Paulson and then by Ilya Merenzon. However, over a period of time, allegations have been made that Agon has also been used as a vehicle to advance the personal interests of certain FIDE officials. In addition, the new presidential candidate, Nigel Short, has suggested that FIDE has lost out when trying to secure revenue from potential sponsors. After visiting the Candidates tournament in Berlin, it is tempting to agree that top chess has an organisational problem.

In an endeavor to make the Candidates tournament more trendy, the event took place in a vacant industrial building in a lower class district of Berlin. The building had six floors, with the contestants playing on the first floor, above ground level, in a square area with a small wall



Photo by Lennart Ootes

separating the games from each other. There were lightweight barrier ropes, as used in airports, to separate the players from the spectators. But again, as in airports, if someone knocked the stands to which the ropes were attached, these could easily disconnect and spring back, creating a loud “ping”. I saw this happen several times in the few minutes I spent on the first floor.

What made the playing hall unusual was the lack of flooring over the area where the games were played, making it possible to look down on the players from the second and third floor. This gave some beautiful shots for the professional photographers and may have some novelty value, but it was not a great way to follow the games. Some people I talked to complained that they were unable to see the positions accurately.

Two screens displaying live game positions had been erected in two corners of the first floor, incidentally creating continuous traffic congestion for those walking around to watch the games. However there were none on the second and third floors. In fact, apart from an empty space in the middle of the room (with a secure barrier I should add) there was nothing at all on those floors.

The fourth floor housed a canteen and the German commentary team. At the beginning of the tournament it was hard to buy a drink there, although later on they did get some soft drinks and coffee. But it was still impossible to buy a beer.

Only the fifth floor was appealing. Although the media room was uninviting, this was not the case with the “gold zone” – the VIP room where the English language commentary took place. There





you could find comfy sofas, free fruit, free bar and chess sets with which you could analyse with other spectators.

I spent a good deal of time there being continuously checkmated by Grandmaster Matthew Sadler, with only one moment of relief, when Alexei Shirov sat down, looked at one of Sadler's more imaginative ideas and played a few non-obvious moves for the defending side, whereupon nothing worked for the Englishman. While he was still ahead, Shirov then left the table, grinned and headed for the bar.

The main attraction for the audience was the press conferences, which normally are confined to the press room, but here were open to the public. Although I liked this practice, some special consideration should have been given to the journalists, who had to fight against a hungry mob for the front row spaces. As a consequence, an amateur journalist asked most of the questions. Although the FIDE press conferences were interesting, many found them uncomfortable viewing, in contrast to the relaxed atmosphere at the US Championship.

The journalists were packed into the most appalling room imaginable: poor lighting, cheap tables and severely limited space. On the last day I spent less than five minutes in there, playing trash basketball with a few top chess photographers, before I went back to the hotel room to follow the games online.

The players were also not happy with the conditions. In the press conference after the first round, Karjakin said that the playing conditions and the hotel accommodation were both horrible. Mamedyarov agreed about the playing hall, but thought the hotel was "sort of okay".

On the other hand, he was unimpressed to have seen the streaming from the live commentary by Judit Polgar on one of the screens on the first floor during his first round game. When Mamedyarov looked at the screen, the transmission had crashed. In the control room, an assistant closed the window, not realising that Polgar's commentary could be heard below. It was only for five seconds, but enough to spook Mamedyarov. He immediately contacted the arbiter, who dealt with it. Well, to some extent. By the 12<sup>th</sup> round we could still hear Judit commentating from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, while

walking around on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Maybe the players, right below us, could too, even if they were unable to work out what she was saying.

A few rounds later, Grischuk went to the players' toilet while in time trouble (somewhere around move 20!) and found it occupied. A move later he returned to find someone completely unknown to him was leaving the toilet. He presumed this was not a last-minute replacement for one of the other players...

The list of obvious failures in organisation is almost endless. There were people everywhere holding signs with "No Mobile" while many were videoing the players with their phones. And there were people employed as stewards who did not speak English.

All in all, I found that the rubbish skip outside the main entrance a fitting symbol of the way the tournament was organised.

## BUT WHO CARES?

Most followed the tournament over the Internet. And, as usual, the official site crashed. The electronic boards were new, not tested and set up half an hour before the start of the first round. There were repeat malfunctions where a ghost pawn popped up on g3 when ♠f1 was played. This happened three times, always when Aronian was Black in the Ruy Lopez! The fourth time this occurred, the officials were ready to intervene with lightning speed, but for some reason they did not do so on the three previous occasions.

Agon Limited has historically fought the transmission of the games by other websites but, beyond a slight delay, it was possible to follow the tournament with your favorite live commentator on many sites.

## A RUNDOWN OF THE PLAYERS

Before the tournament, I considered Caruana to be the favorite with Mamedyarov and Kramnik as his closest rivals. However, before the start of round 13 five players were still in contention, with Ding Liren and Grischuk joining the fray, Kramnik leaving it and Karjakin leading it.

Let's look at their performances one by one in the first twelve rounds.

## WESLEY SO

The young American had a great run in 2016-2017 that earned him the US Championship title and a brief appearance at the number two spot on the Elo rating list. But indifferent results in the last year or so have seen him drop to the tail end of the top 10, giving rise to the feeling that he came to Berlin mostly to learn what the Candidates is all about. After losing his first two games, nothing ever changed that impression. He won a nice game against Aronian in round six, but by then it was already too late to matter.

## LEVON ARONIAN

After spending years in Carlsen's shadow, Aronian dropped down from the number two spot a few years ago. Following one particularly poor season, he recovered some of his lost strength, winning the Sinquefeld Cup in 2015 and the World Cup two years later. Nevertheless my feeling remains that he has lost a good deal of his former strength.

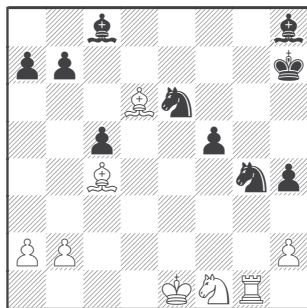
Aronian has had the reputation of being a joker in the pack when it comes to the World Championship cycle, specifically the Candidates Tournaments. It was all too easy for commentators to attest his poor play in Berlin to a nervous disposition, but this sort of pseudo psychology has always been popular with those who do not want to look at the games.

Aronian's real problem was a lack of tactical sharpness. His great understanding of the game presented him with plenty of opportunities and he wanted badly to win. But at critical moments he simply calculated and played badly. Nowhere was this more apparent than in his game against Grischuk from round five:

Levon Aronian 2794  
Alexander Grischuk 2767

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 c5 4.d5 d6 5.e4 e6 6.♘c3 exd5 7.cxd5 ♙g7 8.♘ge2 ♘bd7 9.♘g3 h5 10.♙e2 ♘h7 11.♙f4 ♙e7 12.♙d2 h4 13.♘f1 g5 14.♙e3 ♘e5 15.g3 ♙d7 16.gxh4 gxh4 17.♙g1 f5 18.f4 ♘g4 19.e5 dxe5 20.d6 ♙e6 21.♘b5 ♙c8 22.♘c7+ ♙xc7 23.dxc7 exf4 24.♙d1 ♘g5 25.c8 ♙+ ♙xc8 26.♙d8+ ♘f7 27.♙c7+ ♘g8 28.♙d6 ♙f7 29.♙d8+ ♙f8 30.♙xf4 ♘e6

31.♙c4 ♖xd8 32.♖xd8+ ♔h7  
33.♖xh8+ ♕xh8 34.♙d6



34...♙g5 35.♖g2 ♙e4 36.♙b8  
♙d4 37.h3 ♙e5 38.♙d5 ♙d3+  
39.♙e2 ♙c1+ 40.♙d1 ♙d3  
41.♙d2 ♙f6 42.♙f3

**Draw**

If you cannot win winning positions, you do not win tournaments. It is as simple as that.

## VLADIMIR KRAMNIK

The veteran participant in the field, the only player over 40, came to Berlin with a great desire to fight for first place. He had invested more effort and money in preparing for this tournament than at any other time since his match against Kasparov in 2000. Ranked third in the world, he was full of confidence.

I once suggested to Boris Gelfand that in our lifetime Kramnik is the player who has added most to our understanding of the game. "Of course," Gelfand replied.

But although Kramnik stole the show in the Candidates, he quickly dropped from contention. He started the tournament well, with 2½ points in the first three games, but missed a fantastic opportunity against Caruana in the fourth round, only to fall completely off the cliff. He lost this game with a blunder just before the second time control and went on to give several bizarre press conferences, claiming to be better in almost every position, apart from those that were obviously lost, when the position was "unclear".

The worst Kramnik press conference came after his game with Ding Liren in round seven, where he had blundered away his queen. Ding had then missed a one move win and allowed Kramnik to escape to a drawn ending. But here Kramnik claimed to be on the verge of



Grandmaster **Jacob Aagaard** was the 2007 British Champion, co-founder of the number one chess publishing house, *Quality Chess*, and author of many chess books, including the *Decision Making in Chess* series with Boris Gelfand.

Jacob trained with Mark Dvoretsky and now helps GMs of all levels maintain and improve their level, through coaching and his six-volume series of book, *Grandmaster Preparation*. He is the only chess author to win all four major book awards.

winning. Ding Liren laughed the whole way through and, when asked about his assessment of the game, he simply presented a completely different view. The Internet soon flooded with jokes about Kramnik's loss of objectivity.

In the following round Kramnik lost an easily drawn endgame against Grischuk. By move 24 he could have completely equalised but, hoping that something would turn up, Kramnik avoided all drawing lines in a position where the bishop pair gave him compensation for his pawn deficit. In due course the bishop pair disappeared and all that was left was Grischuk's extra pawn, which he duly converted.

## SHAKHRIYAR MAMEDYAROV

The Azeri superstar was the rating favorite, claiming the number two spot in the rating list after a series of strong performances. At 32 Mamedyarov is at the top of his game and has achieved a level of maturity and seriousness which, together with a knack of getting his pieces to work in perfect harmony, made him a likely winner.

In the first round, with the black pieces, he surprised Karjakin in the opening and sunk into deep thought at move 14, searching for a way to make the most out of the slight pull he had achieved. His solution was truly impressive, and he went on to win a great game.

But Mamedyarov had let go of what had made him such an immense force over the past year. Playing very solid chess, he only won two games out of the first eleven, before over-pressing and losing against Ding Liren in round twelve.

## ALEXANDER GRISCHUK

Everyone's favorite attendee at the press conferences and time trouble addict from hell, Grischuk always makes a big impact in these tournaments, although I considered him a very unlikely Candidates winner. I was surprised that he was still in contention for the top spot with two rounds to go. But luck sometimes goes a long way. He had survived ridiculously lost positions against Aronian and Ding Liren (twice) and won that drawn endgame against Kramnik, leaving him on plus one rather than minus two. In my heart of hearts, I hoped he would not win the tournament, as Carlsen would not let him off the hook in this way...

## DING LIREN

The Chinese number one qualified from the World Cup, where he had lost the final to Aronian. He came to Berlin with a conservative agenda, trying to keep as safe as possible and only take chances when they arose. In round eleven and twelve they finally did. After missing a load of wins against Grischuk, he managed to break his eleven-round drawing streak with a win as Black against Mamedyarov. With two rounds to go, he still had an outside chance, without having fought too hard for it.

## FABIANO CARUANA

The young American hero was my favorite to win the tournament. For many years he had competed for top spots in important tournaments and was one of only three players in chess history to exceed a 2850 rating. If he could hit peak performance it would certainly be enough to win. I believed in his focus and in the experience of his team, led by former FIDE World Knockout Champion Rustam Kasimdzhanov.

Caruana started the tournament with great wins against Wesley So and Vladimir Kramnik. But I was concerned about his attitude at the press conferences. When winning, he was still not optimistic about his chances, and when he was equal, he was even more pessimistic. He sounded a lot like Kramnik in reverse. Only once did he overestimate his chances – and that was in the fatal round twelve encounter with Sergey Karjakin.

## SERGEY KARJAKIN

I was one of few who felt Karjakin had a serious chance of defeating Carlsen in New York and afterwards named him as the most likely challenger in 2018. But following him on Instagram over the past two years meant watching television appearances and pictures with his family in the park – but little chess. His tournament results since the match have been anything but impressive so, like all the others, I had written him off as a serious contender.

And indeed he started the tournament in the same indifferent manner. In the first six rounds he lost two games and looked as out of place as Aronian. But then he picked up random wins, moving back to 50% and then +1, winning after a long passive defence against Aronian in round 11. Suddenly, by beating Caruana in round 12, he had taken the lead – and convincingly.

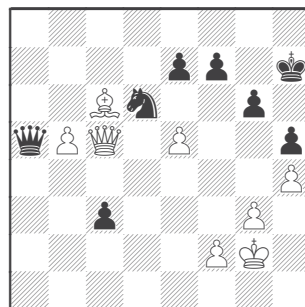
## THE GREAT ANTI-CLIMAX

On the free day before the last two rounds, Karjakin was the leader of the pack, with a better tie-break than Caruana. But then something very odd happened. Karjakin appeared to have no thirst to win the tournament. In the

last two games it seemed that more than anything he wanted to avoid taking any risks. The idea that he would have a chance to win with two draws or even with +1 in the last two rounds, as seemed to be the case, was a far cry from taking matters into his own hands. Remember he had lost to Mamedyarov and therefore would have an inferior tie-break, should the two of them share first place.

Mamedyarov returned to the safety-first strategy he had adopted in the first eleven rounds. This only made sense because he was playing Grischuk, who once again lacked any ability to manage his time.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2809  
Alexander Grischuk 2767



At this point Grischuk could have kept the balance with 34...♖f5, but instead decided to reach a draw by force.

34...♖xb5?? Unfortunately, he was living on increment at this point and missed a simple tactic.

35.e6! ♔a3 36.♖xb5 c2 37.exf7 ♔g7 38.♕e4 c1 ♔ 39.♖e8

**Black resigned**

But while this was going on, Caruana was all over Aronian. And although he fumbled towards the end of that game, I personally did not find it dramatic. Aronian looked entirely depleted of energy and it was no surprise that he completely missed a late chance of counterplay.

The same happened on the last day when several players could theoretically win the tournament. However it quickly became apparent that only a major disaster would deny Caruana overall victory. Karjakin had blundered and had to hold on for a draw, while Mamedyarov never had any real winning chances with Black against Kramnik. It was still

possible for Caruana to throw it all away, but that was clearly not going to happen. In the end he was in fact the only one to win in the final round. When asked why he did not offer Grischuk a draw when it was clear this was enough to win the tournament, Caruana said that he did not see how he could ever lose the game, so why not play it to the end? Clearly, fear of random blunders, such as those committed by ordinary GMs, is not a concern for a top grandmaster with designer glasses.

## LOOKING FORWARD

I would personally have been unhappy if Grischuk or Ding Liren had won the Candidates. Not because of their personalities – on the contrary. Their press conferences were a definite must-see. But the chess world enters the general public's consciousness only once every two years, with the World Championship match.

Caruana correctly put his chances for winning the match in November at 50-50. So, either he wins it or he doesn't. With a current rating gap of a mere 20 points, it will be the closest world title match since 2010, at least on paper. It will be interesting to see if Carlsen will be able to regain some of his seemingly deflated interest for the game ahead of this match, or if he will wake up rather late in the day as he did on the last two occasions. I suppose that if he does not show full commitment, this time he will not get away with it.

It is certain that a lot of backroom discussions are presently taking place, with the intention of moving the world title match from London to St Louis. I have no doubt that this will be a bargaining chip in the upcoming FIDE elections. With the Agon website still wanting to sell me tickets to the Candidates and the FIDE bank account closed and its funds transferred to a mysterious trust, a lot still needs to happen before November. Luckily the players can focus on their preparation, while it will be up to the management teams to worry about booking flights...

If either of the players does happen to see this article, may I please ask you to thoroughly prepare your openings with the white pieces too for this match? I am sure it would give it a competitive edge over the last few title encounters...



25-YEAR-OLD AMERICAN GRANDMASTER, FABIANO CARUANA, EARNS THE RIGHT TO CHALLENGE REIGNING WORLD CHAMPION MAGNUS CARLSEN

# A Deserved WINNER

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH LOOKS EXCITING! ANAND STRUGGLED TO ACHIEVE THIS TWICE AGAINST CARLSEN, ALTHOUGH KARJAKIN HAD MORE SUCCESS IN THIS RESPECT, EVEN IF HE WAS FURTHER AWAY FROM WINNING THAN THE PUNTER IN THE STREET MAY HAVE THOUGHT. FOR THIS REASON IT IS ENCOURAGING THAT CARUANA WON THE CANDIDATES.

by GM JACOB AAGAARD

**F**abiano Caruana was a deserved winner of the Candidates for a number of reasons. He succeeded in building up promising positions with high level strategic play and could easily have won games such as those against Mamedyarov in round three and Ding Liren in round nine. The only other game in the tournament he might have lost, besides the one against Karjakin, was the “Game of the Tournament” in round four against Kramnik. But his incredible resourcefulness helped him turn the tables and find the magical hidden resource 47...♔f6!! that got him out of trouble.

He also managed to balance ambitious play with a limited number of errors, whereas Karjakin and Mamedyarov were not ambitious enough to win the tournament and Kramnik, Ding Liren and Grischuk simply made too many mistakes. Whether this will be enough for Caruana when he faces Carlsen in November, we have yet to see. At the moment the World Champion looks much more like the 2013-14 version who crushed everybody, than the shaky 2016 edition who might well have lost the title.

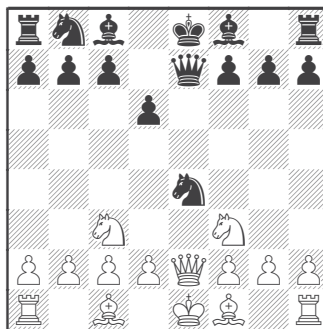
The fourth round game between the two leaders was one of the most important encounters of the tournament. Kramnik had played amazing chess in the first few rounds and had he won this game he would have been on a sensational trajectory. Instead it was Caruana who took the lead and indeed he held it all the way to the 12<sup>th</sup> round.

## C42

|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| Vladimir Kramnik | 2800 |
| Fabiano Caruana  | 2784 |

Round 4,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3  
♘xe4 5.♔e2 ♔e7 6.♘c3



Peter Svidler noticed before the start of the round that *Stockfish 8*, running in the starting position, suggested precisely this line as strongest play for both sides. He was making fun of it with Jan Gustafsson in the *Chess24* broadcast, only to find that Kramnik actually



CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT, Berlin, Germany, March 10-28 2018.

| RK. | NAME                  | RTG  | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | PTS. |
|-----|-----------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1   | FABIANO CARUANA       | 2784 |     | ½ ½ | ½ 0 | ½ ½ | 1 ½ | ½ 1 | 1 ½ | 1 1 | 9    |
| 2   | SHAKHRIYAR MAMEDYAROV | 2809 | ½ ½ |     | 1 ½ | ½ 0 | 1 ½ | ½ 1 | ½ ½ | ½ ½ | 8    |
| 3   | SERGEY KARJAKIN       | 2763 | ½ 1 | 0 ½ |     | ½ ½ | ½ 1 | ½ ½ | 1 ½ | 0 1 | 8    |
| 4   | DING LIREN            | 2769 | ½ ½ | ½ 1 | ½ ½ |     | ½ ½ | ½ ½ | ½ ½ | ½ ½ | 7½   |
| 5   | VLADIMIR KRAMNIK      | 2800 | 0 ½ | 0 ½ | ½ 0 | ½ ½ |     | 1 0 | ½ ½ | 1 1 | 6½   |
| 6   | ALEXANDER GRISCHUK    | 2767 | ½ 0 | ½ 0 | ½ ½ | ½ ½ | 0 1 |     | 1 ½ | ½ ½ | 6½   |
| 7   | WESLEY SO             | 2799 | 0 ½ | ½ ½ | 0 ½ | ½ ½ | ½ ½ | 0 ½ |     | 1 ½ | 6    |
| 8   | LEVON ARONIAN         | 2794 | 0 0 | ½ ½ | 1 0 | ½ ½ | 0 0 | ½ ½ | 0 ½ |     | 4½   |

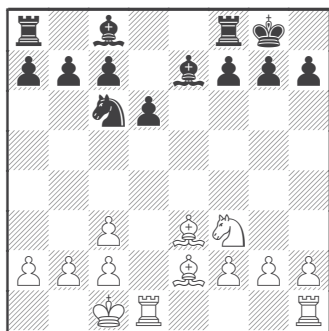


played it! It is clear that Kramnik did not play like this because he felt it was very strong, but simply had no other ideas. It also became transparent during the tournament that he firmly believed he would be able to outplay anyone. Incidentally, this variation was first seen in Hartshorne-Schieffelin, New York 1883. Later in the tournament So played 6.d3 against Caruana, but did not get a good game either from the opening.

6...♖xc3 6...♗f5? would famously lose to 7.♘d5! and 8.d3.

7.dxc3 ♖xe2+ Also interesting was 7...♘c6 8.♗e3 ♖e6!?

8.♗xe2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0



11.♗he1 A young Russian star tried the same variation in a recent game. After 11.♗hg1 ♗e8 12.g4 a6 13.h4 ♗e6 White could be said to have achieved a symbolic advantage in V.Artemiev 2697-A.Khalifman 2614, Moscow 2018.

11...♗f6 12.♘d2!? Kramnik may have played an unambitious opening, but he was still definitely up for a fight. Here he purposely avoided 12.♘d4, which leads to a flat position, in order to create some long term prospects. But I have to say that his intentions and optimism were not in line with the realities of the position. Soon the white pieces will be misplaced. Peter Svidler suggested that 12.♗g1!? made more sense here.

12...♗e8 13.♗f3 ♘e5 14.♗f4!? 14.♗d5 was objectively better, but it seems that Kramnik avoided this on account of 14...c6! 15.♗b3 d5, when Black has completely equalized. White needs to play 16.c4 with a resulting drawish position.

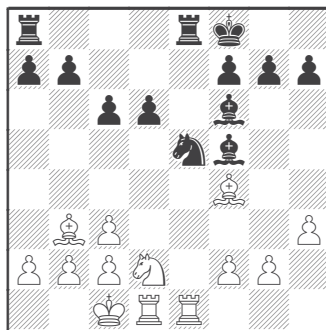
14...♗f8! A nice harmonizing move, supporting life on the e-file.

15.♗d5 A funny line is 15.♗e4 ♗b8!?, intending ... ♗e6 on the next move, when a draw could arise after 16.♗xh7? g6

17.♗h6+ ♗g7 18.♗f4 if Black chooses to repeat. But strong would be 18...♘g4!, when the bishop on h7 is in continual distress. 18.♗xg7+ ♘xg7 19.f4 also fails on account of 19...♗g4.

15...c6 16.♗b3 ♗f5 We can see that Caruana was not only hoping for a draw, but wanted to play a fully-fledged game. If he had wanted the game to be cut short, he would have played 16...d5, when after 17.c4 everything is exchanged with an impending draw.

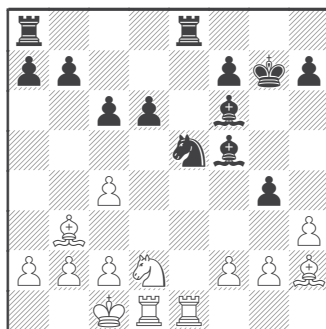
17.h3



17...g5! Grabbing space by exploiting the slightly awkward configuration of the white pieces.

18.♗h2 ♗g7 19.c4?! Kramnik willingly entered the following complications. However his evaluation of the position showed an incredible lack of objectivity; or to be precise, lack of danger. In fact it persisted throughout the tournament, where he repeatedly overestimated his own chances. 19.♗e4 could be met by 19...♗xe4 20.♗xe4 d5 21.♗ee1 b5, but 19.f4! gxf4 20.♗xf4 h5 21.♘c4 was the best continuation.

19...g4!



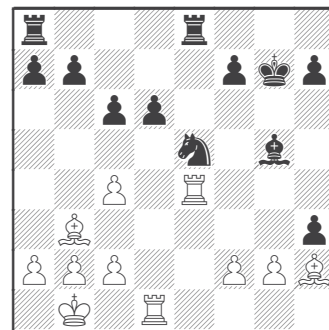
This exploits the weakening of the white pawn structure created by the little move h2-h3.

20.♗e4 After 20.hxg4 ♘xg4 21.♗g3

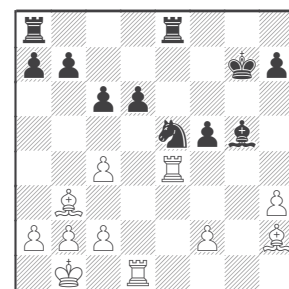
♗g5? White is under uncomfortable pressure. 20.♗f4! was stronger, but he would still be fighting for equality after 20...gxh3 21.gxh3 ♗xh3, which was not the direction that Kramnik wanted to travel.

20...♗xe4 21.♗xe4 ♗g5+ 22.♗b1 White would be in grave danger after 22.♗f4 ♘g6! 23.♗xe8 ♗xf4+ 24.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 25.fxe3 a5! 26.a3 gxh3 27.gxh3 ♗e8, when Black will have very good winning chances on the queenside.

22...gxh3



23.c5!? This was Kramnik's intention. The position now turns very sharp. Black wins the endgame after 23.f4? ♘g4 24.♗xe8 ♗xe8 25.gxh3 ♘xh2 26.fxg5 ♘f3 27.♗c1 ♗e1! as he has managed to make the weakness of the light-squared bishop the only positional feature in the position. Alternatively, 23.gxh3 is met by 23...f5!

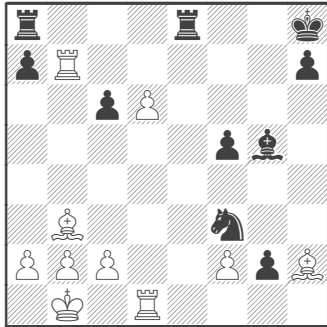


24.♗ee1 (24.♗xe5+ dxe5 25.♗d7+ ♗f6 26.♗e1 ♗h4! is also very dangerous for White, although there is a slim chance to fight for a draw after 27.c5 e4 28.♗f1, no matter how ugly it looks.) 24...♘f3 25.♗xe8 ♗xe8 26.♗xd6 ♘d2+ 27.♗a1 ♘e4 28.♗b4 ♘xf2 29.♗d7+ ♗g6 30.♗xb7 c5! followed by ...f5-f4 wins for Black. The key point is that the bishop on b3 is kept out of the game.

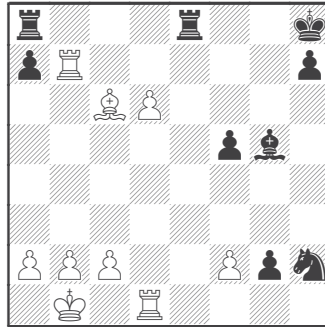
23...f5! The most ambitious. Caruana felt his chances were excellent in what follows.



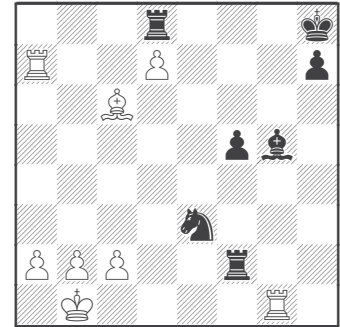
24.♖b4 hxg2 This pawn is certainly valuable.  
25.♙xb7+ ♔h8 26.cxd6 ♘f3



view of the possibility of 27...♙e2. But, quite honestly, almost anything wins.  
27...♘xh2 28.♙xc6



travel via f1, but in time trouble these things matter little.  
32.♙xa7 ♘e3 33.♙g1



Both players were heading for this position. Kramnik considered it very unclear, but in fact it seems to be as poor a position as he reached in the whole tournament.

27.♙a4! This is the only practical chance. Originally Kramnik had intended to play 27.♙g1?, which is rather surprising. I remember taking a serious look at his games 20 years ago and thinking to myself that he never put his pieces on bad squares. This was back in the days when he said he was thinking too much about general considerations. The more tactically oriented and mature Kramnik is all about calculation. Here he rejected this ugly idea and offers to sacrifice a piece in

28...♙ad8! Kramnik blamed this move on his misfortune. Without it, he would have been close to winning, it seems. Black just takes on d6. Caruana had originally planned 28...♙e4, with the idea 29.♙xe4 fxe4 30.♙g1 e3! and Black wins on account of 31.fxe3 ♙f8!. However, White would have been able to put up much more resistance with 29.♙g1.

29.d7 Absolutely forced. White has to hold on to the passed pawn or Black will just snatch it. For example: 29.♙xe8 ♙xd6 30.♙g1 ♘f3 and Black wins.

29...♙e2 30.♙xg2 ♙xf2 31.♙c6 ♘g4 Bringing the knight back into the game makes a lot of sense. It was stronger to

This is the moment where the game starts to turn.

33...h6? "I wanted to get my king into the game." Caruana. "I thought Black had to be fast here, because if White manages to consolidate, as in the game, it is just over." Kramnik. Both players considered 33...♙xc2 34.♙c7, but somehow missed the obvious 34...♙f6, when Black just wins. "There are no heroes in time trouble."

34.♙c7! Preparing to run up the board with the a-pawn.

34...♙g7 35.a4 ♔f7 35...♙xc2 no longer wins, as 36.♙c8 ♙xc6 37.♙xd8 ♙d6 offers roughly even chances.

36.♙b5 ♔e7 36...f4 made more sense.

# Aagaard's ALL-AROUND TRAINING 4

01

## TRAINING IN AUTOMATIC DECISION MAKING

There is only one move.

### ACTION

Candidates check. Is there only one option?

### TRAINING

Candidates. Practice finding additional ideas.

02

## SIMPLE DECISIONS

Positions without much to calculate.

### ACTION

Quick decision making. Can often be played on feeling.

### TRAINING

Train using the three questions:  
1. Where are the weaknesses?  
2. What is the opponent's idea?  
3. Which is the worst placed piece?

03

## CRITICAL MOMENTS

Moments where you sense that the difference between the best and other moves is high.

### ACTION

Accurate calculation. Don't rely on intuition. Work it out; no guessing.

### TRAINING

Practice calculating difficult tactics.

04

## STRATEGIC DECISIONS

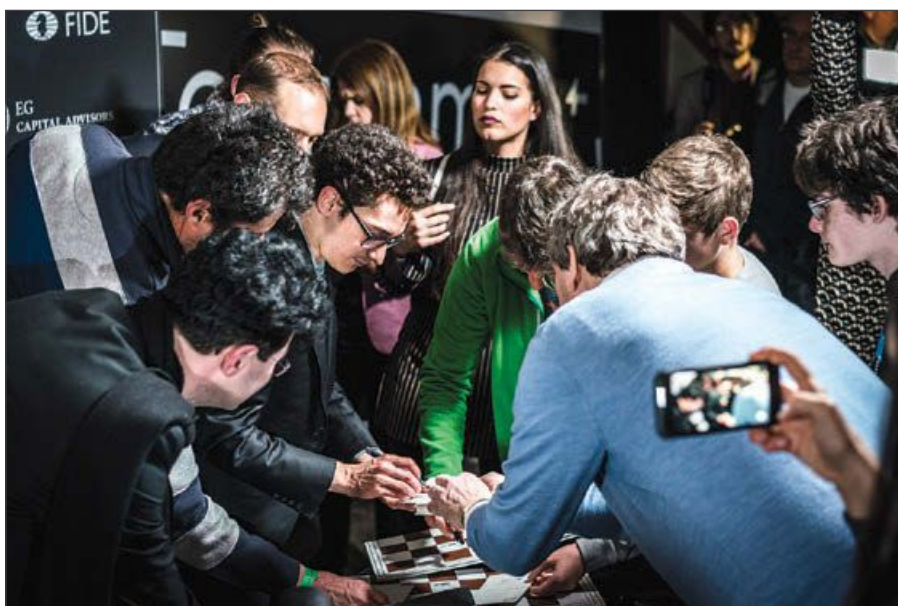
Complex positions that cannot be conclusively worked out.

### ACTION

Use all your tools, from general considerations and three questions, to deep calculation.

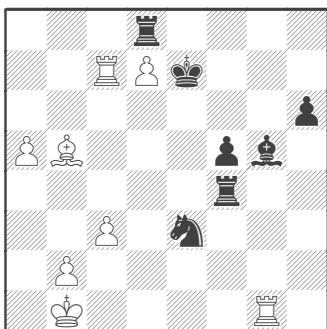
### TRAINING

Analyse games deeply, solve difficult strategic exercises.



37.a5 ♖f4 38.c3! Keeping the rook away from the queenside.

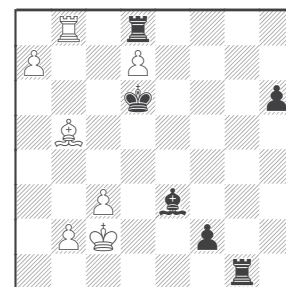
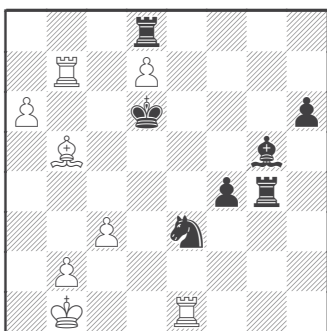
▲ Fabiano Caruana with fans, Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.



38...♔d6? Black could still maintain the balance with 38...♖g4 39.♖h1 ♔d5 40.♖c5 ♔d6 41.♖c8 ♖xd7! 42.♖d1 ♖d8! 43.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 44.c4 ♖xa5, although White will be the one pressing.

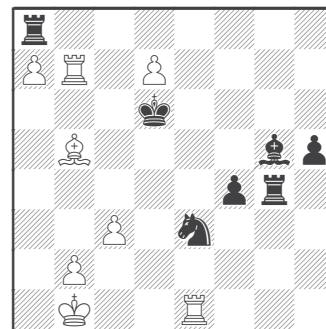
39.♖b7 If 39.♖c6+ ♔e7 (39...♖xd7 40.♖xh6+) 40.a6 ♖xd7 41.♖c8 ♖a7 (41...♖d8 42.♖xd8 ♖xd8 43.a7) 42.♖e8+ ♔f6 43.♖xe3 ♖b4 44.cxb4 ♖xe3.

39...♖g4 40.♖e1 f4 41.a6



But here Black has an extra chance in 45...♖g2!. (Caruana seemed to have mainly looked at 45...♖xa7, which loses flatly to 46.♖xd8 f1♖ 47.♖xf1 ♖xf1 48.♖a8 and the rook endgame is completely hopeless.) 46.♖f1 ♖xa7 47.♖xd8 ♖g7 48.♖b5 f1♖ 49.♖xf1 ♖xd7 50.♖h8 ♖e3 and it is possible the game is still within the margin of a draw, although I am not sure Hawkeye would be able to see it...

42.a7 ♖a8

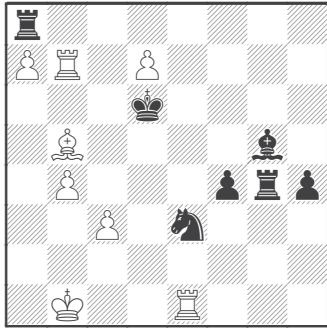


The time control has passed and Caruana sank into deep thought. To me this was one of the great moments of the tournament for him. He thought for a long time, realizing that he had completely blown it, and found the best chance to fight back.

41...h5! "Here I just got too relaxed." Kramnik. Actually, I think Kramnik's continual overestimation of his chances worked against him. It was clear from listening to him in the press conference that he believed the position would win all by itself. As a trainer I encourage my students to go for positions that require no accuracy in calculation to be won, but in reality this does not happen very often. At grandmaster level, however, the reality is different. Critical moments occur in many positions. It is important to spot them and to apply accurate calculation. Guessing (or playing by hand, if you like) is a poor strategy for such decision-making. The variation recommended by the engines was the one Caruana rejected as being hopeless: 41...f3 42.a7 f2 43.♖xe3 ♖xe3 44.♖b8 ♖g1+ 45.♔c2.

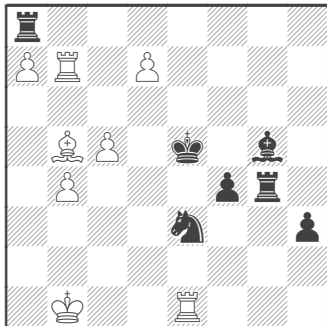
43.b4? This is the move most people would make in blitz. Kramnik felt that anything would win, but the reality is far different. Caruana was afraid of another option: 43.c4!. Kramnik had also seen it, but considered it too complicated and that it was unnecessary to go for complications. The direct threat is c4-c5+, but Black has various ways to avoid this. Caruana was intending to play 43...♔c5 (43...f3 loses to a direct attack. 44.d8♖+! ♖xd8 45.♖xe3 ♖g1+ 46.♔c2 f2 and now it's checks all the way. Well, almost. 47.♖d7+ ♔c5 48.♖d5+ ♔b4 49.♖b3+ ♔a5 50.♖a3+ ♔b6 51.♖a6+ ♔b7 52.♖d7+ ♔c7 53.♖c6! ♖c8 54.♖xc7+ ♖xc7 55.♖xc7+ ♔xc7 56.a8♖ f1♖ 57.♖c6+ ♔b8 58.♖d6+! and checkmate is near.) 44.b4+! ♔d4 (If 44...♔xb4 45.♖c6+ ♔c5 46.♖f3 followed by ♖b5+ and White wins.) but after 45.♖c6 and 46. ♖c7 Black has no defense at all.

43...h4

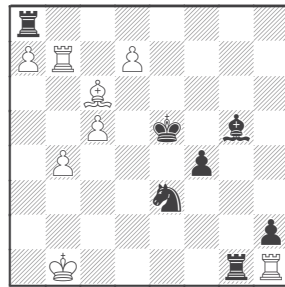


**44.c4?** This was in fact the actual moment when the win was thrown away. 44.d8♖+! ♕xd8 45.♞d7+ ♔e5 46.♙c6 ♞xa7 47.♞xa7 was not too clear to the players as Black has a lot of counterplay. But the rooks are strong and once they are coordinated they will provide White with the firepower he needs to win the game. But I can see why Caruana wanted to take his chances here, rather than enter one of the other lines he had looked at.

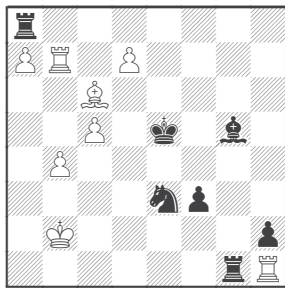
**44...h3 45.c5+ ♔e5**



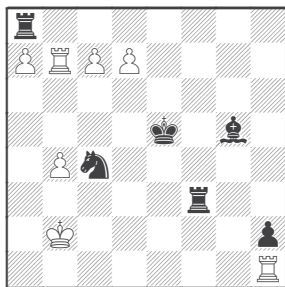
**46.♞b8** Kramnik played this quickly and afterwards in the press conference could not get his head around the fact that there was no longer any win. Obviously he had planned this well ahead and gone for it with a carefree attitude. I don't know if he rather underestimated his opponents' resourcefulness in Berlin, or whether he had just lost his sense of danger in general. Either way, he missed the resources of his opponents far too often for it not to be a topic of discussion. It is not too difficult to work out that 46.c6 h2 47.c7 ♞g1 48.♙c6 does not win, as after 48...♞xe1+ 49.♔a2 ♞a1+ Black makes a draw. More tricky is 46.♙c6, when Black has to play very actively to save the game: 46...h2 47.♞h1 ♞g1+



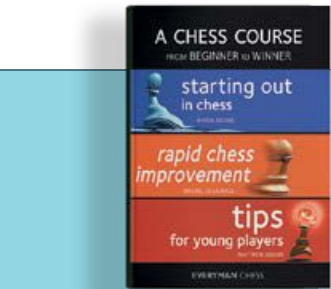
**48.♔b2** The most challenging. (Black makes an easy draw in the forced line after 48.♔a2 ♔c2 49.♞xh2 ♞xa7+! 50.♞xa7 ♔xb4+ 51.♔b3 ♔xc6 52.♞a6 ♞b1+! – a resource the players appeared to have seen. Following 53.♔c2 ♔b4+ 54.♔xb1 ♔xa6 55.♞h5 ♔e6! 56.♞xg5 ♔xd7 the endgame is a dead draw.) 48...f3!!



This tempo gaining move was what Caruana was relying on. After 49.♙xf3 (49.♞xh2 ♔d1+ and 50...f2 is also fine for Black.) 49...♞g3 50.c6 (50.♙c6 ♔c4+ is an immediate draw.) 50...♞xf3 51.c7 ♔c4+



...Black escapes with a perpetual check as after 52.♔c2 ♔a3+ 53.♔d1 ♞d3+ 54.♔e2 ♞e3+ it would be a bad mistake to play 55.♔f2? ♞f8+ 56.♔g2 ♞e2+ 57.♔h3 ♞f3+ 58.♔g4 ♔e4! when White is mated in eight moves. But as all of these moves are very easy to make, this is far less scary than it sounds. **46...♞xa7 47.♞g8**

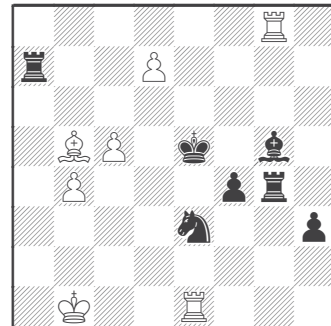


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"I thought this just finishes the game," Kramnik said at the press conference. Again, one wonders why he thought Caruana would go for this variation, or indeed if he was thinking about it at all.

**47...♙f6!!** An amazing resource. The key trick is that after 48.♞xg4 ♔f5! the tables have turned and Black is the one who wins.

**48.d8♖ ♕xd8 49.♞xg4 ♙f6 50.♞g6 ♞b7** Caruana shows that he wants to take every chance he can to fight for a win, rejecting 50...♔f5 51.♙d3+ ♔e6 where White can take a repetition. Kramnik intended 52.♞xf6+ ♔xf6 53.b5, when he

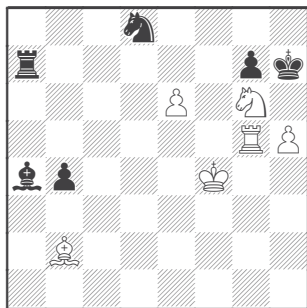


# 01 TRAINING IN AUTOMATIC DECISION MAKING

In the tournament Caruana failed to take advantage of quite a few chances. This was one of them.

## Caruana 2784 – Ding Liren 2769

Round 9,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018



**66.♔f8+!** Instead Caruana played 66.♔e5?, only to see his advantage evaporate after 66...♔e8. He played 67.e7 and offered a draw.

**66...♔h6** 66...♔g8 67.h6! is winning. White is ready for ♔xg7, while after 67...♔xf8 he has the decisive 68.h7!.

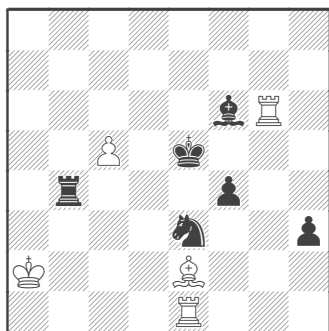
**67.♔g4!** Black will be mated.

**67...♔d1+ 68.♔h4 ♔c2 69.♔g6+ 69.♔c1** also mates.

**69...♔xg6 70.♔c1** mate.

felt White had great chances to win the game. In reality the chances are rather balanced.

**51.♔e2 ♔xb4+ 52.♔a2**



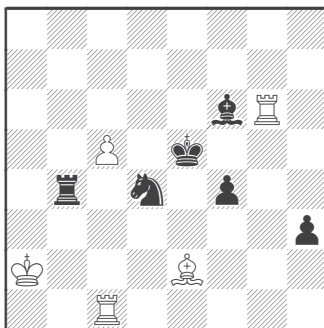
White is no longer playing for a win. “No

one cares what the pieces are called at this point.” Svidler. “Here I am better again.” Kramnik. “I completely underestimated how strong the c-pawn is.” Caruana.

**52...♔c2?** Accompanied by a draw offer. “A fantastic decision,” Kramnik said the next day, “...to accompany a bad move with a draw offer. Without this I probably would not have lost the game.”

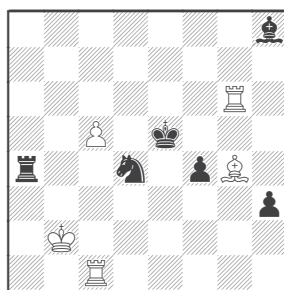
**53.♔c1!** Suddenly White has some active chances again. But the position remains very sharp.

**53...♔d4**



“Probably a draw, but it is only White who can win,” said Kramnik. This time he was heading slightly in the wrong direction as White would be very close to winning if he had played the strongest continuation.

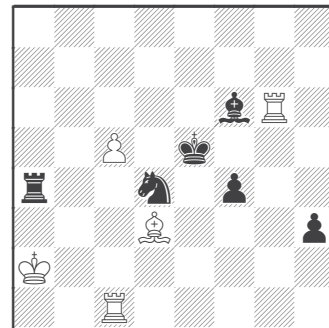
**54.♔d3?** 54.♔g4 was very dangerous for Black. The following variation seems to be best play for both sides. I will skate through it rather quickly, as I am not a fan of long variations. 54...♔a4+ (54...h2 drops a piece to 55.♔e1+. There is some counterplay, but not enough to compensate for the rook deficit.) 55.♔b2 ♔h8



56.♔g8 (56.c6 looks promising, but after 56...♔a7 Black survives on account of 57.c7 ♔b7+! 58.♔a3 ♔xc7!) 56...♔f6 57.♔f8 ♔h4 58.c6 ♔a7 59.♔xh3 ♔e7 60.♔e8 ♔d6 61.♔h8 f3 62.♔c4 ♔f5 63.♔b3 ♔f6 64.♔f8 ♔d4+ 65.♔c3 ♔e5

66.♔d8+ ♔c7 67.♔d5 ♔b5+ 68.♔b4 ♔c3+ 69.♔b3 ♔a3+ 70.♔c2 ♔a2+ 71.♔d3 ♔d2+ 72.♔e4 ♔d6+ 73.♔xd6 ♔xd6 74.♔xc3 ♔xc6 75.♔xf3. This endgame is of course a tablebase draw. But in practice it is very hard to defend for Black.

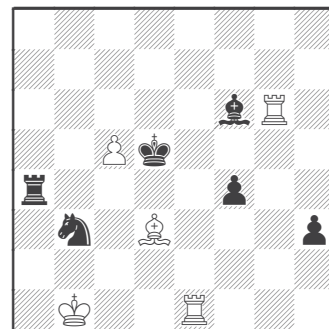
**54...♔a4+**



**55.♔b1** “I decided to repeat moves, but then suddenly ...♔b3 came.” Kramnik. Had Kramnik not given in to the sudden impulse to repeat moves, he would have played 55.♔b2, with the main line being 55...♔e6 56.♔h1 ♔b4+ 57.♔c3 ♔c6+ 58.♔xf6+ ♔xf6 59.♔xh3. Kramnik felt he had chances here, but Caruana was not so concerned. Indeed, after the obvious 59...♔g5!, Black draws easily.

**55...♔b3** How quickly things have turned around! Kramnik still did not think he was at risk of losing the game, whereas Caruana expressed the opinion that only Black could win. In practice, he was right.

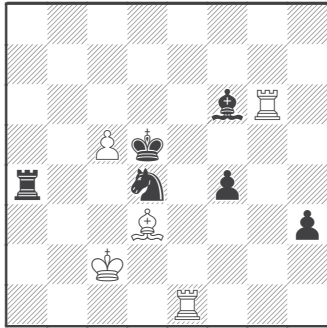
**56.♔e1+ ♔d5**



Kramnik was down to seconds and just panicked.

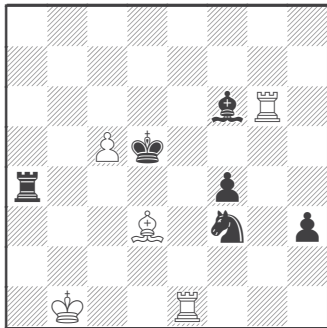
**57.♔c2** Kramnik was thinking about playing 57.♔xf6 ♔a1+ 58.♔b2 ♔xe1 59.♔xb3 h2, but did not have time to calculate it up to a draw. He was considering 60.♔c4+ (60.♔b5) 60...♔xc5 61.♔f5+ ♔d6 (61...♔d4 62.♔xf4+ ♔e3 63.♔h4) 62.♔d5 f3 63.♔xf3 ♔e3+

64.♔c4 ♖xf3 65.♗h5 ♖f2 66.♔d4.  
57...♜d4+

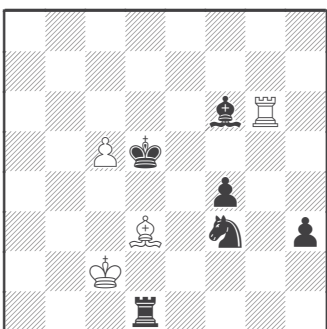


58.♔b1?! 58.♔c1!, to be able to bring the bishop back to b1, was a much easier draw for White.

58...♜f3! Now things are not so easy.



59.♗d1?? 59.♗f1? was Kramnik's original intention, but he panicked when he saw that after 59...♜d2+ 60.♔c2 Black has 60...♖a2+! (or 60...♜xf1 61.♗xf6 ♜e3+) and made the first move that came into his head. Kramnik had seen that 59.♗xf6 ♜xe1 60.♗f1 h2 61.♗h6 was a draw, but he was still looking for a way to win the game. But "it is becoming too tricky for time trouble." After 61...♔xc5 62.♗xh2 White will hold in the long run, but Black will still be able to create some problems for him before a draw will be agreed. 59...♖a1+ 60.♔c2 ♖xd1



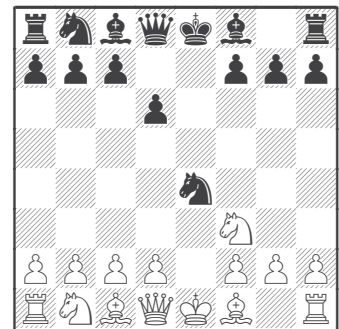
▲ Vladimir Kramnik slumped at the board after realizing his 59<sup>th</sup> move had been a blunder.  
Photo by Evgeny Surov.

61.♗a6 Resigning also made sense. But bearing in mind the mandatory press conference that followed right after the game, it makes sense to recover a while before resigning. And while you are there, you may as well make a few moves. 61.♔xd1 h2 is the obvious point. The black pawn cannot be stopped.

61...♗d2+ 62.♔c1 ♗b2+ 63.♔b1 ♔xc5 64.♗b7 ♜e5 65.♗f6 f3 66.♗f5 f2  
**White resigned**

surprise Caruana in this game, but he was still emotionally and mentally prepared for the resulting type of play. I personally find Caruana's choice very impractical.

3.♜xe5 d6 4.♜f3 ♜xe4



5.♜c3! This is the variation that put the Petroff out of business. Black's position is rather passive in these lines and offers very limited winning chances. The fact that Caruana did not have many problems in this opening earlier in the tournament probably had something to do with being faced twice with 5.♗e2 ♗e7 6.♜c3.

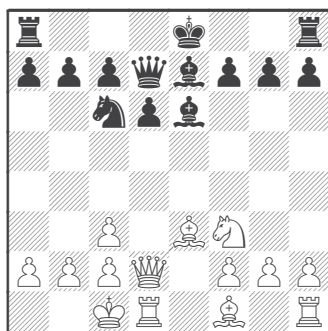
5...♜xc3 6.dxc3 ♜c6 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♗d2 ♗e6 8...0-0 9.0-0-0 ♜e5 has also been played many times over the years. This sharp variation with opposite sides castling has however fallen from grace, with the solid approach chosen by Caruana in this game taking precedence. 9.0-0-0 ♗d7 White has played in several different ways at this juncture. Karjakin chose something new.

## C42

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Sergey Karjakin | 2763 |
| Fabiano Caruana | 2784 |

Round 12,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

1.e4 e5 2.♜f3 ♜f6 With opening preparation being as deep as it is these days, and the problems remembering all the various finesses which are so necessary in order to cause problems for the opponent, it makes little sense to play the same opening three times in a row in the same tournament. You are a sitting target. Karjakin did not manage to



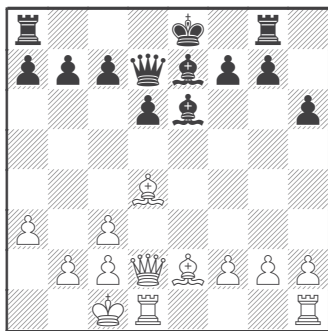
**10.a3!?** “I respect Rustam Kasimdzhanov very much, so I simply repeated his move. I do not think it was too much of a surprise for Fabiano.” Karjakin.

**10...h6** After the game, Karjakin said he had focused on 10...a6, which was the choice of Yuri Kuzubov last year.

**11.♟d4** This is not a significant novelty. **11.♞b1** gave White some chances in R.Kasimdzhanov 2698 - Li Di 2488, Chengdu 2017. Kasimdzhanov has been Caruana’s trainer for some years now, so it was possible that Caruana was ready for this line.

**11...♟xd4 12.♟xd4 ♜g8!?** This quirky plan was undoubtedly prepared beforehand by Caruana’s team. After **12...0-0 13.♜g1!** White will generate attacking chances on the kingside.

**13.♟e2** **13.c4** is premature on account of **13...c5** and queenside castling.



**13...c5** It is not as easy for Black to solve his opening problems as he had anticipated. **13...0-0-0?** drops a pawn to **14.♟xa7**, while **13...a6** is met by **14.c4** and **♞c3**, grabbing space. **13...♞a4** was Matthew Sadler’s idea, constantly looking for attacking ideas on the queenside, but Black is not yet ready for this and after **14.f4!**, with the

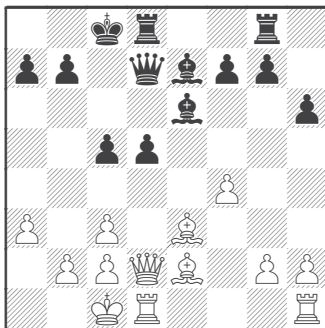


▲ Sergey Karjakin vs. Fabiano Caruana. Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

idea of **g2-g4** and **f4-f5**, White stands better. However, should White play **♟f3** too soon, this sort of active plan would become feasible for Black.

**14.♟e3 d5** This looks very natural, but it is also very committal. You could imagine that future games would continue **14...0-0-0!?**, when the strongest reply is probably **15.♜he1** or **15.♞b1**, simply improving White’s position, since **15.c4**, trying to take control of the d5-square, is met by active counterplay: **15...♞a4! 16.♞d3 ♟f6**. Here White might soon get into big trouble if he continued **17.♜he1 b5! 18.cxb5? (18.♞b3** keeps him on the straight and narrow.) **18...c4! 19.♞d2 ♟f5 20.c3 ♞b3** with a strong attack.

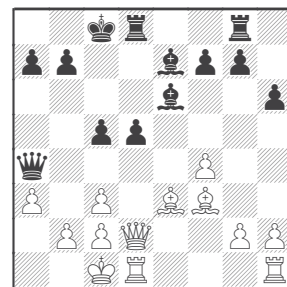
**15.f4 0-0-0**



**16.♟f3** This moment was important for the further course of the game. Caruana decided to go for simplification, but

found no relief. **16.♞b1 ♟f5** would completely equalize as Black is all ready to play **...♟e4** and **...f7-f5**.

**16...♟g4** “This looked very natural and I expected it.” Karjakin. In the analysis room I got checkmated again and again by Sadler, going for **16...♞a4**.

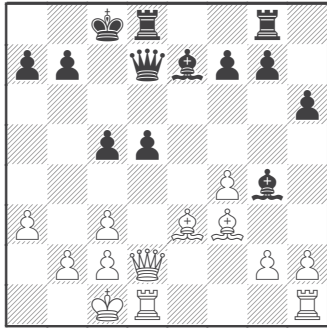


But eventually we worked out that White comes first after **17.♞f2! ♞c4 (17...d4 18.cxd4 c4 19.d5!** simply does not work. **19...c3 20.♞d3!** is a crucial point here.) **18.f5!** An important move. **18...d4!?** (**18...♟x5 19.♟e2** and White wins.) **19.cxd4 cxd4 20.♞xd4 ♞xd4 21.fxe6! ♞d6 22.exf7** and White has strong compensation for the exchange. He will get two pawns and a safer king.





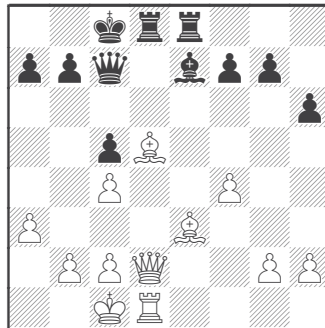
Best might have been 16...f5, when after 17.♖he1 ♕f7 Black is only slightly worse.



**17.♕xd5!** “I should not have allowed this. I thought I would be okay after ♕xd5, but it becomes very difficult to play.” Caruana. “Of course it was not easy to sacrifice the exchange, but then I thought, okay, I should play like a man. If I do not sacrifice in this tournament situation, what else do I need to sacrifice. It was the perfect moment for it.” Karjakin. The rising star of Russian chess, Vladimir Fedoseev, compared the bishop on d5 to the eye of Sauron from Lord of the Rings, which casts its

fiery glance all over the lands, seeing everything, controlling everything. 17.♖f2 ♕xf3 18.♖xf3 is a bit better for White according to the engine, but I am not convinced. Neither were the players, by the way. Accepting the pawn sacrifice with 17.♖xd5 never crossed the mind of either player, I am sure. After 17...♖xd5 18.♖xd5 ♕xf3 19.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20.gxf3 ♖d5 Black has far more than reasonable compensation for the pawn.

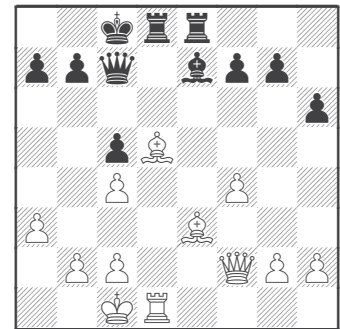
**17...♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♖c7 19.c4 ♖ge8**



“It was only a few moves after the exchange sacrifice that I came to the realization that I could not do anything.

I was under the illusion that I would have some counterplay, be able to trade bishops or somehow get my king safe. But White just plays these prophylactic moves, a3, ♖b1, ♖a2 and his king is very safe. Maybe it is not so bad, but practically it was very unpleasant and with each move it became more unpleasant. I think 16...♕g4 was a very bad decision.” Caruana.

**20.♖f2**



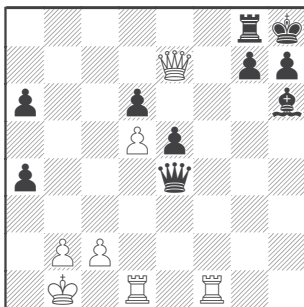
Karjakin played this phase of the game excellently. He simply improved his position and it quickly turned out that Black needed to do something, as in the

## 02 | SIMPLE DECISIONS

### OPPONENT'S IDEAS

**Caruana 2784 - Mamedyarov 2809**

Round 3,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

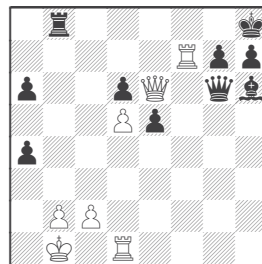


White is threatening ♖f8, and Black needs to be ready for this.

**36...♖g6!** On the official broadcast Judit Polgar mentioned 36...♖b4? 37.♖f8 g6,

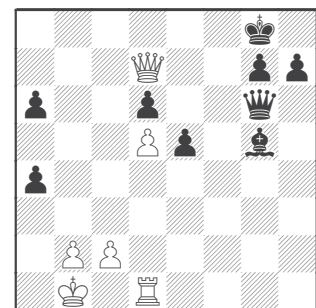
when White mates with 38.♖f6+! ♕g7 39.♖xg8+ ♖xg8 40.♖e6+.

**37.♖f8** More challenging was 37.♖e6! ♖b8 (37...♕f4? 38.♖xg6 hxg6 39.♖xf4!) 38.♖f7



...when Black has to play 38...♕f4! 39.♖xg6 hxg6 40.♖a7 a3 41.b3 g5 42.♖xa6 e4 and the passed pawns give him enough counterplay to make a draw.

**37...♕g5! 38.♖xg8+ ♖xg8 39.♖d7**

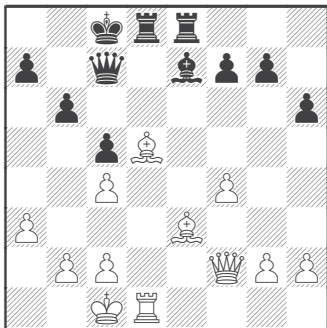


**39...h5!** Caruana and Mamedyarov both felt that Black had the better chances here. But the computers just laugh and declare the position 0.00, which has no relevance to what happened in the game.

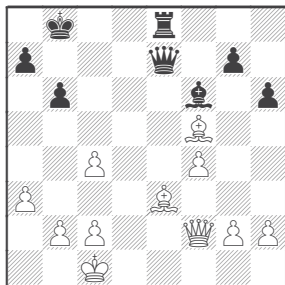
**40.♖g1 e4 41.♖xa4 e3 42.♖xa6 ♖f5 43.♖a8+ ♖h7 44.♖e8 ♕f4 45.♖e6 g6!? 46.♖f1 ♖g7 47.♖xf5 gxf5 48.c4 ♕g3 49.♖g1 h4**

**Draw**

long run he would have trouble creating counterplay. 20.g4?!, to prevent ...f7-f5, seems tempting but Black, exploiting his lead in development, can react quickly. 20...♗h4! followed by ...♖e7 is one annoying option for White to consider. **20...b6**



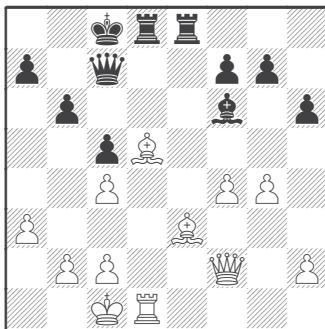
Sadler did not like this move, but his attempts to checkmate me (this time sitting on the white side of the board), were less successful. 20...f5! was a solid claim of space. Karjakin would most likely have continued 21.♗b1, which is not very critical, as after 21.♗e6+ ♗b8 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.♗xf5 ♗f6 Black would have active counterplay. 24.♗xc5?! b6 25.♗e3 ♖e7



...is an important point. White cannot allow ...♖e2, so he would have to play 26.♗d4 to be able to meet it with ♗xb6. After 26...♗xd4 27.♖xd4 ♖e1+ 28.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 29.♗xd1 ♖f8 30.g4 g6 31.♗xg6 ♖xf4 32.h3 ♖f3 33.h4 ♖f4 34.g5 ♖xh4 35.gxh6 ♖xh6 the draw is near.

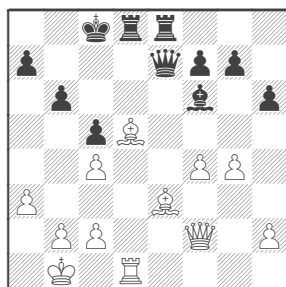
**21.g4!** A simple space grab. Black wants to play ...♗f6 at some point and White wants to meet it with g4-g5. 21.♖d3 ♗b8 22.a4 is tricky to assess, but 22...a5 23.g4 ♗f6 24.♖b3 ♗a7 25.♖b5 is not as dangerous as it looks at first glance. Black has 25...♗h4, but can also try 25...♖xd5!? 26.cxd5 ♖e4∞ when the rook is completely misplaced on b5.

**21...♗f6**



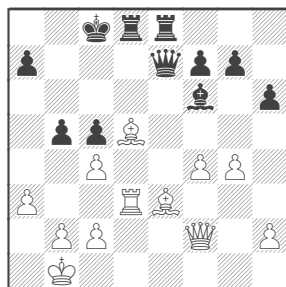
**22.♗b1!** Caruana was not happy with his position, but did not work out that this was the moment where he had to fire all his bullets so as not to allow the game to slip away. 22.♖f3 ♖e7! 23.♖e1 ♖c7!, with the threat of ...♗d4, would not give White an obvious way to improve his position. 22.♖d3 ♖e7 also does not work as 23.♗b1 transposes to the game, while 23.a4? ♗d4! would give Black the initiative.

**22...♖d7?** A passive move that achieves nothing, as doubling the rooks on the e-file turns out to be harmless. The computer points out that Black could have solved his problems by taking immediate action: 22...♖e7!



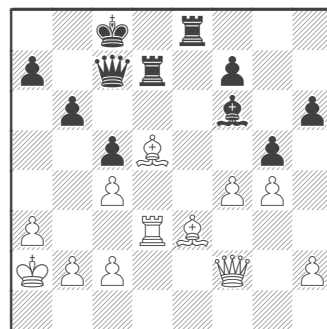
**A) 23.♗c1 ♗d4** (23...♖e2!?) 24.♖g2 (24.♖xd4 cxd4 25.♖xd4 ♖f6) 24...♖e2 25.♖h1 ♖xd5! (25...♗c7!?) 26.cxd5 ♖xg4 and Black is not worse.

**B) 23.♖d3 b5!!**



This brute force solution is the last chance to save the game. But it works beautifully. 24.♗c1 (24.♗a2 bxc4 25.♗xc5 ♖e2 26.♗xc4 ♖xd3 27.♗xd3 ♖xf2 28.♗xf2 ♗b8 followed by ...♗d8-b6 with even chances. But not 24.b3? bxc4 25.bxc4 ♖xd5!! 26.cxd5 c4 and Black even wins.) 24...bxc4 25.♗xc4 ♖xd3 26.♗xd3 ♗d4 27.♖f3 ♗c7 and Black will continue with ...♖b8 followed by a sprint with the king to the kingside. Here Black would even have a chance to play for an advantage, if White does not quickly do something sensible. However, it is very easy to sit with a powerful engine and point out such brute force solutions. We saw very few instances of great tactical operations at the Candidates, and quite a lot of instances of poor calculation. Seen in that light, it is “on par” that Caruana did not find this solution. But it was there and my students find similar ideas in positions where they know beforehand there is something, so it was certainly possible.

**23.♖d3! g5** It is easy to criticize the moves made by Black, but very hard to suggest improvements. Caruana’s play looks entirely aimless in this phase of the game. So, do not look at the computer evaluations, but rather at the way the number two player in the world was unable to find any way to make his pieces play. 23...♖de7 does not achieve anything. White can for example continue 24.g5!? hxg5 25.fxg5 ♗e5 (25...♖xe3 26.♖xe3 ♖xe3 27.gxf6! and White wins.) 26.h4 g6 27.♗c1± offering him excellent winning chances as he is preparing ♖f3 and later can break through with h4-h5 and g5-g6. **24.♗a2!**



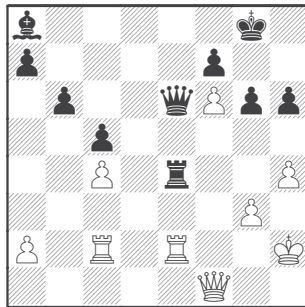
Karjakin simply continues to improve his position, preventing future counterplay. **24...♖ee7** 24...♗b8 was suggested by Peter Svidler as a last chance, but White

## 02 | SIMPLE DECISIONS

### PIECES

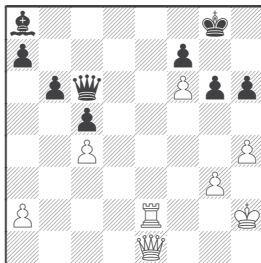
#### Ding Liren 2769 - Caruana 2784

Round 2,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018



The game actually ended 42...Bxe4??  
43...Bf2 44...Bf5 44...Bc1 45...Bh7 45...Bc3  
h5 46.a3 Draw.

But 42...Bxe1! would have been  
devastating as White manages to  
activate his poorly placed rook on c2  
after 42...Bxe2+ 43...Bxe2 Bc6.

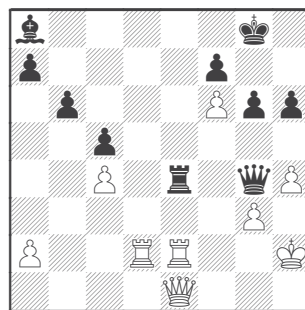


Now after 44.h5! Black's position  
collapses. Even if you did not see  
this, going in the direction of the  
kingside made sense. 44...Bh7  
Otherwise Black cannot deal with  
the h-pawn, as checks on the b1-h7  
diagonal would hurt badly. 45.Bf1!  
and White has a winning advantage.  
A hypothetical game could continue:  
45...gxf5 46.Bxe5 Bxd7 (46...Bg8  
47.Bd5! Bxe8 48.Bd2 Bxe4 49.Bd8+  
Bg7 50.Bd3 and White wins.)  
47.Bb1+ Bg8 48.Bxe1 Bc6 49.Bxe3  
Bd1 50.Bxe8+ Bh7 51.Bh8+ Bg6

52.Bxh6+ Bh5 53.Bxh5+ and White  
wins the endgame.

Technically, more resistance would  
have been offered by 42...Bg4, which  
is possibly what made Ding Liren  
reject 42...Bxe1, if indeed he thought  
about it at all.

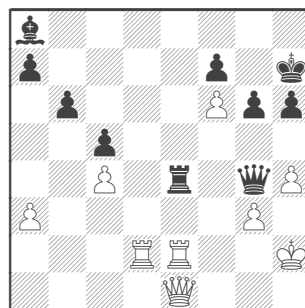
43...Bcd2!



This is another step in the right  
direction and therefore enough to  
decide to play in such a way. But  
I understand that this may not be  
sufficient justification for everyone,  
so I have analyzed the position  
deeply, to prove the positional  
point mathematically. I just want  
to emphasise that in the decision-  
making process, all we need to see  
is progress.

43...Bh7!? This is the toughest nut to  
crack. 43...Bf3 44.Bxe4 Bxe4 45.Bf2  
Bd3 46.Bxe2! forces the exchange of  
queens, because after 46...Bd4 47.Bf4  
White wins immediately.

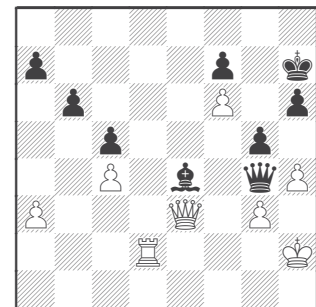
44.a3!



It turns out that Black is in a kind of

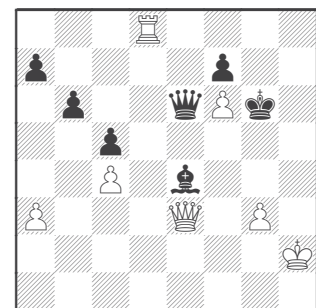
zugzwang, where every move will  
compromise his position. Moreover  
the pawn is better placed on a3, as the  
bishop is unable to swoop down on it  
later. Another point I should mention  
is that seeing such a move is not  
important for finding 42...Bxe1. Chess  
is played move by move. Besides,  
other moves here give White great  
chances, this just happens to be the  
strongest.

44...Bc6 45.Bxe4 Bxe4 46.Bxe3!  
g5



47.Bxe2! Bxe6 47...Bf5 48.Bh5 and  
White should win the endgame.

48.hxg5 Bh6 49.gxh6 Bh6  
50.Bxe3+ Bg6 51.Bd8



...and we see how the rook has  
managed to get into the game with  
great effect. White is winning on  
account of 51...Bxf6 52.Bh6+ Bh7  
53.Bf8+ Bh6 54.Bd6+—

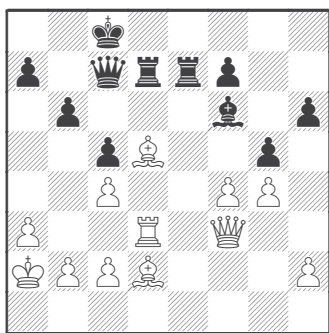
So Caruana missed a great chance  
against Ding Liren, but to offset this  
he had already had a slice of good luck  
earlier in the tournament.



appears to be winning after 25.♔d2!? a6 (25...♗g8 26.♖b3) 26.♖b3 ♔a7 27.fxg5 hxg5 28.♙xg5 ♙xg5 29.♗xg5±. Nevertheless this was a better chance than what was played in the game.

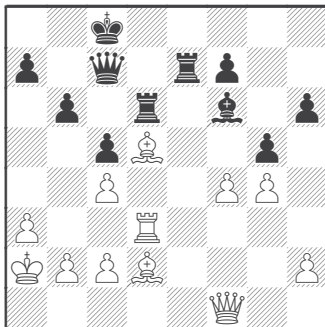
25.♗f3 ♔d8 The sort of move you make when you have no idea what to do. It was probably better to hide the king in the corner, although after 25...♔b8 White has a strong attack by 26.fxg5 ♙xg5 27.♙f2! ♙f4 28.h3 and will continue to put pressure on Black on both sides of the board.

26.♙d2 ♔c8



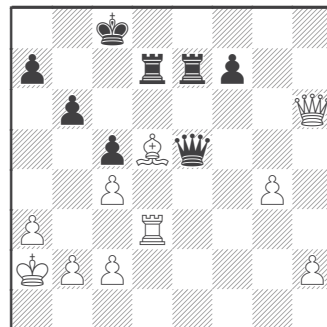
27.♗f1!! Karjakin was very proud of finding this move – not sure if it was winning or not, but at least knew it was very strong. Caruana could not find a way to deal with the threat of ♖h3.

27...♙d6



28.fxg5 Picking up the extra pawn is the simplest way forward. 28.♖h3?! is a bit more murky, as 28...♗d7! complicates matters on account of 29.♖xh6 ♙xd5! 30.cxd5 ♗xd5+ 31.c4 ♗xd2 32.♖xf6 ♖e2 33.♗b1 ♗d4! when Black has enough counterplay to make a draw.

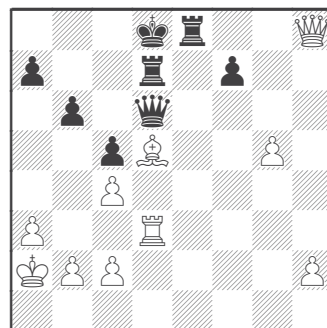
28...♙xg5 29.♙xg5 hxg5 30.♗f5+ ♙dd7 31.♗xg5 ♗e5 Or 31...♗xh2 32.♗g8+ ♔c7 33.♗a8. 32.♗h6



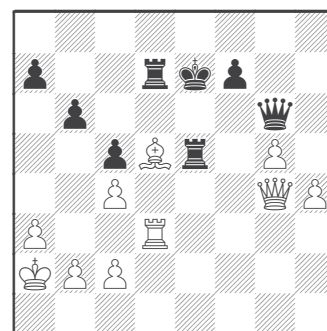
32...♔d8?! Not the strongest defense, but after 32...f6 33.h4 White would also be on track to converting his extra pawn. 33.g5! The move of a strong technician. The f7-pawn is fixed for future harvesting.

33...♗d6 Or 33...♖d6 34.♗f8+ ♔c7 35.♗a8.

34.♗h8+ ♖e8



35.♗h4 Karjakin had wanted to play 35.♗h3, but after 35...♗f4! he found things less obvious. In fact White wins after 36.♖f3 ♗xg5 37.♙c6, but converting an extra pawn is not what Karjakin had been envisaging at this stage. 35...♗g6 36.♗g4 ♖e5 37.h4 ♔e7



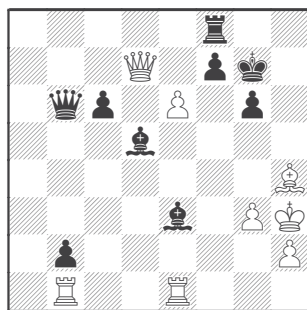
## 03 CRITICAL MOMENTS

### CRITICAL MOMENTS

In a less important sideline in the first round encounter between the two Americans, White comes under pressure, but has a beautiful drawing idea:

**Caruana 2784 - So 2799**

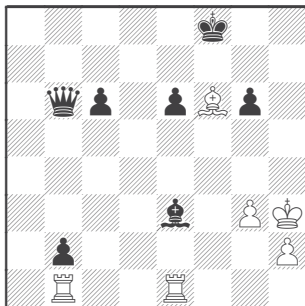
Round 1,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018



35.e7! ♙e6+ 36.♗xe6 fxe6 37.♙f6+!! This move is essential. Without it,

White loses. For example: 37.exf8♗+? ♔xf8 38.♙f6 (38.♖e2 ♙d4) 38...♗a5! 39.♙xb2 ♔e7 and Black will be able to combine threats against the white king with an advance of his passed pawns, to win in the long run.

37...♔f7 38.exf8♗+ ♔xf8



39.♖xb2 The extra tempo gives White time to coordinate his pieces and create active counterplay.

39...♗c5 40.♖be2 ♗f5+ 41.♔g2 ♙b6 42.♖xe6 and White draws.

White can win in several ways here, but Karjakin chooses the best line, making things easy.

**38.♖d2!** 38.♖xf7 does work, but after 38...♗f5 39.♖xd7+ ♗xd7 White should not go for the endgame, but rather play something like 40.♗g3!, when advancing the g-pawn on the next move seals the deal. **38...b5 39.♖xf7! ♗f5 40.♖xd7+ ♖xd7 41.♗xf5+ ♖xf5 42.g6 ♖e7 43.cxb5 ♖h5 44.c4 ♖xh4 45.a4! ♖g4 46.a5 ♖d6 47.a6 ♖c7 48.♖b3**

**Black resigned**

Asked what he thought of the tournament standings after taking a narrow tie-break lead, Karjakin said: "I just want to calculate well and play well and count up the points only after the last round. It is clear that many people will be trying to win now. The best I can do is to try my best in the last two games." Karjakin mentioned that in 2014, in Khanty-Mansiysk, he also came back from minus two to plus two, so he knew it was possible. After losing two of his first four games, he had deliberately made a few draws to regain his composure and get the feeling of survival. At the press conference Caruana's comment was: "This is basically the worst thing that could have happened, but there are still two games left, so we will see."

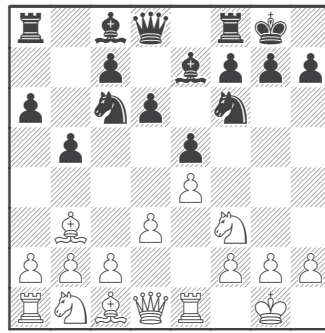
I came across Caruana as he was leaving the building but I could not really speak to him as he was rushing down the stairs with a vacant expression on his face. However, at a later press conference, he added that when he woke up the next morning, his mood had entirely changed. The weight of defending a lead had lifted and his focus shifted to what he could do in his final two encounters. Seen in the rear view mirror, losing this game may just have won the tournament for Fabiano.

## C88

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Fabiano Caruana | 2784 |
| Levon Aronian   | 2794 |

Round 13,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

**1.e4 e5 2.♂f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.d3 d6**



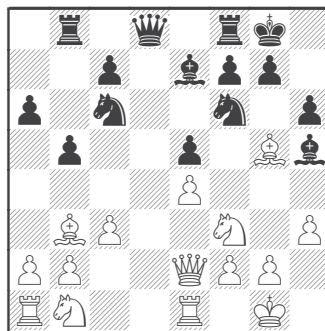
**9.♗d2!?** This was introduced by Grischuk in the previous round against Aronian and has the benefit of making a game of it. Getting the chance to play like this so early on is rare nowadays.

**9...♗g4** Classically, this pin works better if White has already played his pawn to d4. If not, there is a tendency for the bishop to get kicked around, as the light squares desperately need the support it can provide. I personally think the bishop is better placed on b7 or d7.

**10.c3 d5!?** Aronian likes this push in most positions, but at this point it seems more in harmony with the position. 10...♘a5 11.♗c2 c5 12.h3 ♗d7 would be a good version of the Chigorin Variation. **11.h3! ♗h5 12.♗e2** Black's position looks beautiful, but how can it be improved? And long term, what will Black do about the light squares in the centre?

**12...♖b8 13.♗g5!** Putting pressure on the light squares in the centre.

**13...dxe4 14.dxe4 h6**



**15.♗c1!** This is the ideal position for the bishop in most Ruy Lopez structures. It is not in the way and aims at the important squares on f4 and h6. It is rather rare that the bishop takes this long to get there!

**15...♗g6** White will play ♘bd2-f1-g3 and if it arrives with gain of tempo, Black loses the flexibility to cope with it.



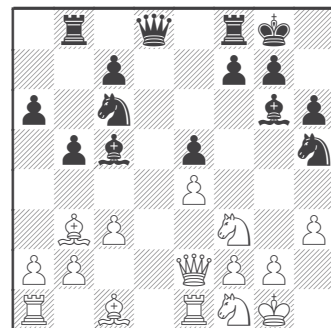
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**16.♘bd2 ♘h5 17.♘f1 ♗c5** Black has dealt with the standard ♘g3+♘h4 plan.

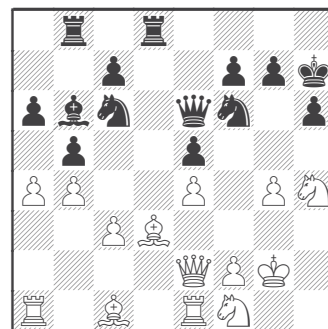


**18.g3!** This move shows Caruana's approach to the middlegame – keep things open and stay in control. At this point it works well. It was also possible to play 18.♗d5 ♗d7 (18...♗f6? would lose a piece to 19.g4!) 19.♗xc6 ♗xc6 20.♘xe5 ♗e6 21.♘xg6 fxg6 22.♗e3 ♗xe3 23.♗xe3 ♘f4, where White has an extra pawn, but Black has a lot of compensation. In practical terms, this

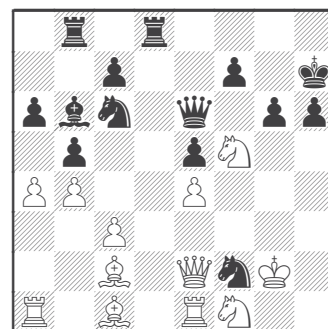


▶ Fabiano Caruana vs. Levon Aronian. Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

## 26.hxg4



26...♖xg4 26...♗xg4+? 27.♗xg4  
 ♖xg4 looks like a double attack,  
 but White is winning after 28.♗e2! ♗xf2  
 29.♗d1! or 28...♖xf2 29.axb5 axb5  
 30.♗xb5.  
 27.♖f5 ♖xf2 28.♗c2 g6



29.♖1e3?? This mistake could be hard  
 for some to understand, but for a player  
 with deep dynamic roots as Caruana, it is  
 natural to seek an active forward-moving  
 way to deal with any issue. 29.♖5e3!  
 would have kept everything under control.  
 Most importantly, it would not open the  
 g-file, which is where Black's potential  
 counterplay comes from in the game. White  
 wins after 29...♖h3 30.♖d5, for example  
 30...♖f4+ 31.♖xf4 exf4 32.♗xf4 ♗f6  
 33.♗f3 ♗d4!? 34.♖e3! etc. Everything may  
 be a mess, but White has an extra piece.

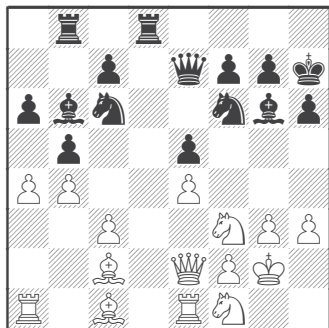
29...gxf5 30.exf5 ♗f6 31.♗xf2 I had  
 anticipated this moment a good deal in  
 advance and suggested on the Chess24 live  
 broadcast chat that, when it arose, Black  
 would have a chance to get back into the  
 game. My good friend, Peter Svidler, was  
 a bit condescending when he rejected the

was the second choice, especially as it  
 is really hard to find a way for Black to  
 continue the game.

18...♗h7? This is the type of position  
 where the games between the best  
 players are decided. Black is a bit worse  
 and desperately needs to find a way to  
 play the position. And this is not it. Black  
 will not play ...f5 and the time spent  
 improving the king's position could  
 have been used far better. My suggestion  
 here is that Black should play 18...♖f6  
 19.♗c2 ♗d7 and ...♗f8, where White is  
 better but still has to show great play to  
 outplay someone like Aronian.

19.♗g2 ♗e7 As previously stated, 19...  
 f5? is out of the question – no matter  
 which way Black tries to implement it.  
 Played here 20.exf5 ♗xf5 21.♗c2 ♗f6  
 22.♖g5+ is a direct refutation.

20.♗c2! ♗fd8 21.b4 ♗b6 22.a4 ♖f6

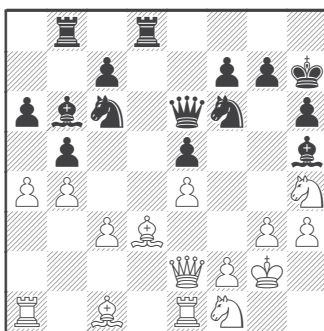


23.♖h4!? At this point it was certainly  
 a serious option to play 23.axb5 axb5  
 24.♗xb5, although it is by no means

easy to calculate accurately. Black had  
 a chance to play either 24...Nd4!? or  
 24...♗xf2, making a mess of everything.  
 White is better, but from the perspective  
 of playing against someone who seems  
 shaky, like Aronian, delaying the critical  
 moment seems sensible.

23...♗e6 24.♗d3 It is very hard to  
 understand why Caruana chose not to  
 eliminate the bishop on g6. 24.♖xg6! fxg6  
 25.♗d3 gives White perfect control.

24...♗h5! A serious provocation and  
 certainly the right practical choice.

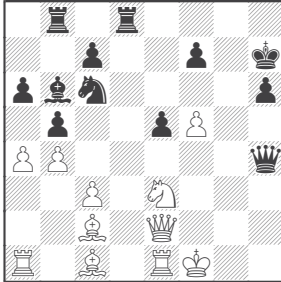


25.g4!? This is a very double-edged  
 decision, allowing Black to mess  
 everything up. If Caruana had played 25.f3  
 he would have remained much better, but  
 he certainly knew that a crunch point would  
 come later. So the fact that he had avoided  
 decisive play previously did not mean he  
 was nervous, but that he was looking for  
 the most opportune moment for it.

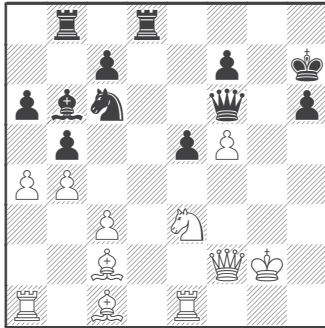
25...♖xg4 25...♖xg4 26.hxg4 ♗xg4  
 27.f3 and the attack is over.



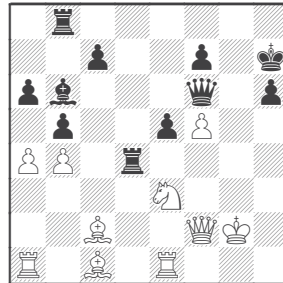
relevance of this line, as certainly no one would play the unnatural 29.♘1e3... Here, 31.♙xf2? would be bad, as after 31...♙h4+ 32.♙f1



32...♘d4!! Black has a winning attack after both 33.cxd4 ♙xd4 and 33.♙g2 ♘xc2 34.♘xc2 ♙g8.



31...e4?? This is the sort of move to be seen in a blitz game. The knight comes to e5 and maybe something will work out. However, it is all too slow. Aronian is a tactical trickster, but not a classical attacking player. Certainly someone like Anand, Tal or Kasparov would have seen there was a desperate need to bring up all the pieces. 31...♘xb4!! 32.cxb4 ♘d4!

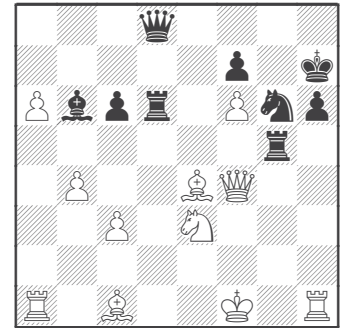


... is the solution. The rook comes to f4 and the other rook to g8. Everything is suddenly happening with great urgency, as it should in attacking chess. There are many plausible variations here, all leading to a draw, but I would like to focus on the most direct one: 33.♘d5! ♙xd5 34.♙f3 ♙h4 35.f6+ ♘h8 36.♙h1! ♙g8+ 37.♙f1 ♙c4+ 38.♙e2 ♙h4!? 39.♙f3

♙c4+ with a draw. I should add that if Aronian had taken this opportunity, all three results would have been possible. The lines are very complicated and both players were under great pressure, both from time trouble and the tournament standing.

32.♙h1! ♙d6 33.♙xe4 ♙g8+ 34.♙f1 ♘e5 35.♙f4 c6 36.axb5 Taking on h6 won immediately, which explains Aronian's next move. But it all falls apart just the same.

36...♙g5 37.bxa6 ♙d8 38.f6+ ♘g6



39.♙xh6+

Black resigned

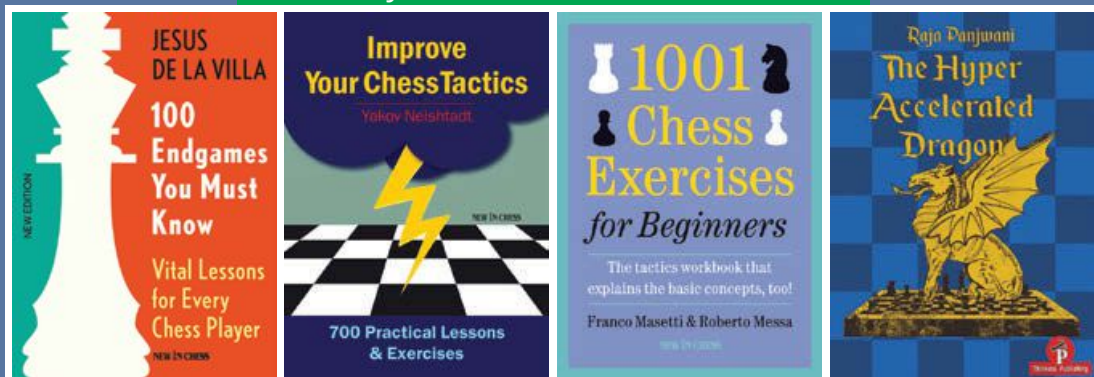
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by GM JACOB AAGAARD



ronian allegedly said that this is the tournament most people care about every two years, which is surprising, as it is also the one with the worst games. I personally found the games in Berlin to be of very high quality. What was different was the attitude of the players. In the Candidates there was only one prize and all of the players wanted it. In the second half, Aronian, Kramnik and So were out of contention, but Aronian and Kramnik in particular were still playing highly combinative chess till the very end.

## C65

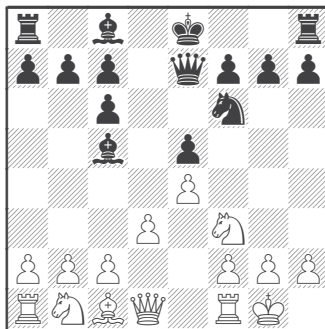
|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| Levon Aronian    | 2794 |
| Vladimir Kramnik | 2800 |

Round 3,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

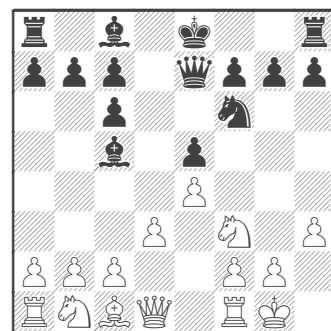
Francesco Tristano, a classical and experimental pianist from Luxembourg, made the ceremonial first move for this round...

**1.e4** Previously Aronian has only very rarely played 1.e4, specifically against Kramnik in an exhibition match in Zurich 2012. so everyone expected the move on the board to be retracted. But in fact Aronian had prepared this surprise for the present game.

**1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♙c5 5.♙xc6 dxc6 6.0-0 ♖e7**



**7.h3?** “I always considered 7.h3 as a very serious move and actually spent a lot of time analysing it, which was not so easy. Then a couple years ago I found the very strong resource 7...♙g8. I think it is just a killer. I mean, Black is probably just better after ...♙g8 and I was waiting for a moment to use it and of course that came at the most unexpected time – in the



Candidates, against Levon, who doesn't play 1.e4.” – Kramnik. The former World Champion considered himself lucky to be able to unleash this novelty at such a big event, as he thought it more likely he would be able to play it against Anand or Carlsen.



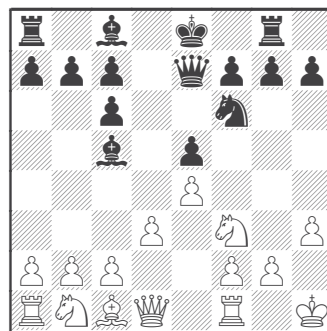




▲ Playing hall, Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

**7...♞g8!** “The computer does not display this move at first, but once you enter ...♞g8, it starts to like it very much.” – Kramnik. Well, *Stockfish 9* discovers it at depth 22 in about 10 seconds and even the throwaway engine *Deep Fritz 13*, decides this is the move within half a minute.

**8.♖h1** 8.♖bd2 g5 9.d4 ♟xd4 10.♜xd4 exd4 11.e5 ♜d5 12.♜e4 ♟f5 13.♜g3 was played in Selen-Kopeikin, email 2012, when strongest is 13...♞e6! 14.♞xd4 ♟xc2 after which Black would have a serious advantage.



**8...♜h5** Kramnik confessed to not remembering anything more. Often the layman does not realise how much time the top players spend memorising their analysis. They may have a better memory than the ordinary tournament

player, but are also required to remember their openings in far deeper detail. For this reason, they will often not remember something they have not looked at recently. 8...h6! followed by ...g5 was played in two correspondence games. Black won both of them. However, Kramnik’s move also does not let White off the hook.

**9.c3** If 9.♜c3!? g5 10.♜xe5 g4 11.d4 ♟d6 (11...gxh3 12.g4! ♜f6 13.g5, or here instead 12...h2 13.g5 ♞xg5 14.♟xg5 ♞xg5 15.♞f3 f6 16.dxc5 ♟xe5 17.♞g2±) 12.g3 ♟xe5 13.dxe5 ♞xe5 14.h4 ♟d7.

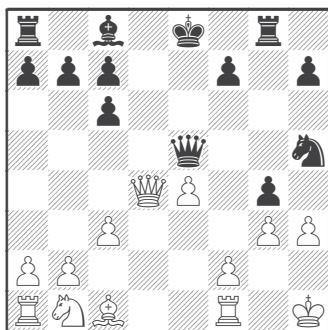
**9...g5 10.♜xe5** 10.d4 exd4 11.cxd4 ♟b6 was very unpleasant for White.

**10...g4 11.d4 ♟d6 12.g3!** White is already under a lot of pressure. For



example: 12.♔e3? ♕xe5 13.dxe5 gxf3 14.g3 ♖xe5 with a winning attack after 15.♘d2 ♕g4 or 15.♖d4 ♘xg3+! 16.fxf3 ♖xg3 17.♖d2 ♖g2+.

12...♕xe5 13.dxe5 ♖xe5 14.♖d4

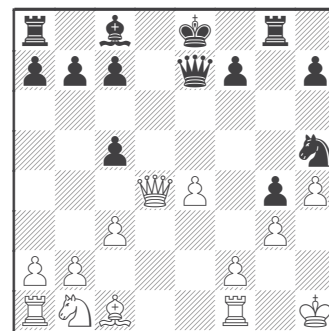


14...♖e7! Kramnik rightly judges that his king is safer than his

opponent's and that his lead in development will cause the greatest possible problems for Black. "It was an oversight on my part. I did not realise that Black does not have to exchange the queens," said Aronian, who refused the notion of bad luck, claiming that missing this move was the core of his downfall. It seems that overlooking it and not going into a bad, but survivable endgame after 14...♖xd4 15.cxd4 gxf3 16.♔h2♖, had a big psychological effect on Aronian and he missed the chance to fight on at every turn from here on.

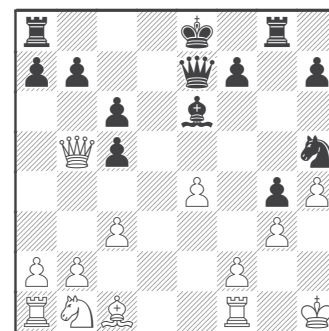
15.h4?! It was stronger to play 15.♔e3!, when Black is better after something like 15...gxf3 16.♘d2 b6, but the game still goes on.

15...c5



16.♖c4? This is a very strange mistake. How can a player like Aronian allow Black to gain this many tempi on his queen when he is already under attack? This and other moments in the tournament convinced me that he was simply playing poorly in the Candidates, not that there was some psychological problem that prevented him from winning the tournament. 16.♖d3 ♕d7 17.c4 0-0-0 18.♘c3♖ was pointed out by Kramnik as the only chance. "It's still not great, but maybe it is possible to fight," was the Russian's damning opinion of his opponent's best shot to stay in the game. I think both players overestimated Black's chances at this point. He is better, but it is not so easy for him to find a way to continue.

16...♕e6 17.♖b5+ c6



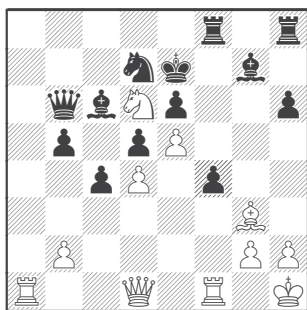
18.♖a4? Aronian said he simply forgot that Black could play ...f7-f5, leading to a totally winning position as White has no way to stop ...f5-f4, with an all-out attack. "18.♖e2 f5!" and Black wins – Kramnik. 18.♖d3 was the only way to stay in the game, but then 18...♖d8 19.♖e3 ♕c4 20.♖g1 ♖g6 gives Black a winning attack in practical terms, even if the computer manages to hold the pieces together for now...

18...f5! "After this I just wanted to finish the game in the most beautiful way." Kramnik.

## 01 | TRAINING IN AUTOMATIC DECISION MAKING

### Grischuk 2767 – Ding Liren 2769

Round 4,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

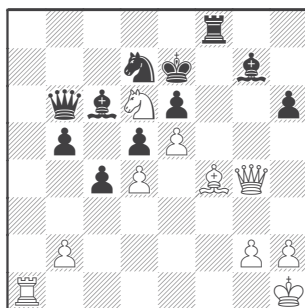


22.♖xf4?? Grischuk overlooked a direct win here by 22.♔h4+ ♕f6 23.♖g4! and the check on g7 is deadly since if 23...♖hg8 24.exf6+ and ♖xf4(+) wins easily. Mysteriously, Ding had seen this and planned to reply 23...♖xd4. But later, when it was his opponent's move, he discovered that White wins with 24.♔xf6+ ♘xf6 25.♖g7+ ♔d8 26.exf6 ♖xf6 27.♘b7+! and Black is checkmated. But this is very strange as White has many

other strong options along the way, which is not a surprise if you look at the position.

22...♖xf4 23.♔xf4 ♖f8! Returning the favor, Ding played 23...♔d8? and the game continued to hold chances for both sides until it was eventually drawn on move 51.

24.♖g4 If 24.♔g3 ♔d8! and the king will escape to safety, with a winning position for Black.



24...♖xd4!! 25.♔g5+ 25.♖xg7+ ♔d8 26.♔xh6 ♔c7 would give Black a winning position on the queenside.

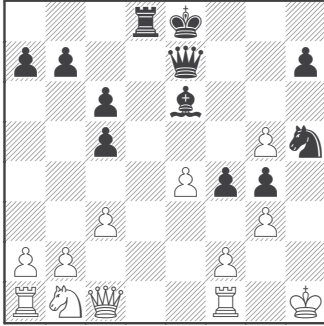
25...hxg5 26.♖xd4 ♕xe5-+

**19. ♖g5** The key tactical point is 19. exf5 ♖xg3+!, when Black has a mating attack after 20. fxg3 ♕d5+ with ... ♖e2 coming.

**19... ♖xg5 20. hxg5 f4**

Also 20... ♖xg5!? comes very much into consideration.

**21. ♖d1 ♖d8 22. ♖c1**

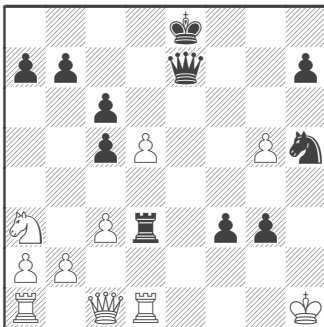


**22... fxg3 22... ♖xg5** was also strong. Black has a lot of ways to win the game at this point. Some White players may already have resigned here, but most would prefer to play on with the odd chance of something weird happening – and let the audience witness what they have already understood is inevitable.

**23. ♖a3 ♖d3 24. ♖d1 ♕d5!** Kramnik was a little nervous that he would miscalculate here, but he could not resist going for the most beautiful way to win.

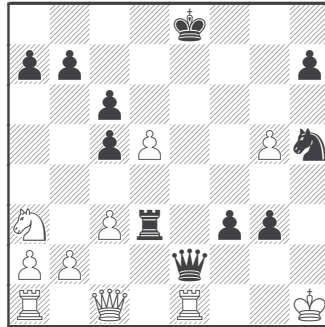
**25. f3** Another line is 25. exd5 ♖e4+ 26. ♖g1 gxf2+ 27. ♖xf2 ♖f3+ 28. ♖g1 ♖g3+ and mate is near. Kramnik also mentioned 25. ♖xd3 ♖xe4+ 26. f3 gxf3 27. ♖e3 f2+ 28. ♖xe4 ♕xe4 mate, saying “the main idea was to win like this...”

**25... gxf3 26. exd5**



**26... ♖e2!** Amusingly, Peter Svidler said that it was still possible for Black to blunder in such a way – after which Kramnik actually played this beautiful move! It is not only the prettiest, but also the shortest route to mate.

**27. ♖e1**



**27... g2+** Two possible ways for the game to end are: 28. ♖g1 f2+ 29. ♖h2 g1 ♖+ 30. ♖xg1 f1 ♖+ 31. ♖h1 ♖g3 mate

and 28. ♖h2 g1 ♖+ 29. ♖xg1 f2+ 30. ♖h1 ♖h3+ 31. ♖g2 f1 ♖ mate.

Kramnik correctly pointed out that on the one hand this was a very beautiful game, but on the other it was not a great achievement. White had quickly got into a bad position and Black could win however he wanted. When asked if he had a favourite artist who he would like to paint a picture of the final position, he said he would defer that question to his son and daughter.

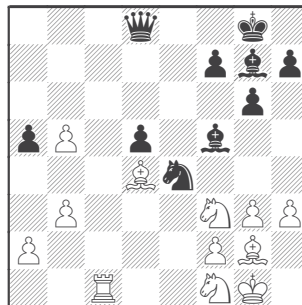
**White resigned**

The greatest game of the Candidates was played between two players who were already out of the running for first place!

## 01 | TRAINING IN AUTOMATIC DECISION MAKING

### Kramnik 2800 – Ding Liren 2769

Round 7, Candidates, Berlin 2018



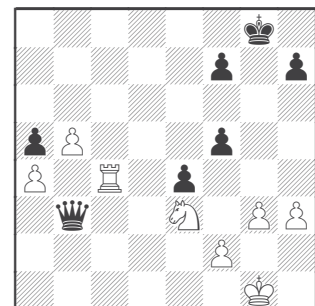
**27... ♕xd4? 27... ♕d7!** would have changed things greatly. The first key point is that after 28. a4 ♕xd4 29. ♖xd4 ♖xf2! Black wins. So White has to play 28. ♕xg7 ♖xg7 29. a4 (29. ♖d3d2 ♖f6! 30. a4 ♖e7 leaves Black in control. The queen will dominate the black position and the b3-pawn will eventually fall.) 29... ♖f6 30. ♖d1 ♖b2 31. ♖d3d2 ♖c3 32. ♖e1 ♖a3 33. ♖e3 ♕e6. Now Black has consolidated his advantage and will steadily increase pressure on the b3-pawn. White is too passively placed to survive in the long run.

**28. ♖xd4 ♖b6 29. ♕xe4?!** 29. ♖d1 was tougher, but Black has ways to

play for an advantage here too.

**29... dxe4 29... ♕xe4 30. ♖d1 a4** was possible, but after 31. bxa4 ♖a5 32. ♖e3 Black would have to find the incredible 32... ♖a7!!, when amazingly White is in zugzwang. After 33. ♖d2 ♖xa4 Black gets the chance to put White under pressure, although the white fortress should be able to withstand this.

**30. ♖xf5 gxf5 31. a4 ♖e6 32. ♖e3 ♖xb3 33. ♖c4=.**



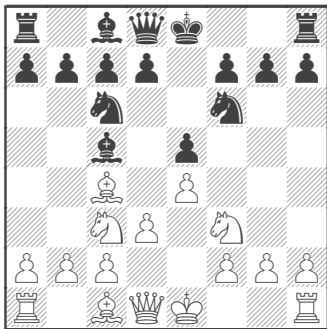
Kramnik thought only White could play for a win at this point, which was somewhat over-optimistic. The press conferences during this phase of the tournament were rather bizarre, revealing that Kramnik played with great imagination, but also with a greatly reduced sense of danger.

**Draw**

## C50

Vladimir Kramnik 2800

Levon Aronian 2794

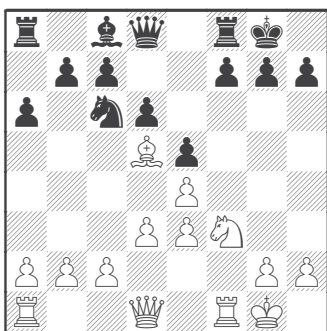
Round 10,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 20181.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.♘c3  
♘f6 5.d3

White is not trying for anything with the Four Knights Italian. Of course this is an opening played by young children who have no sense of the finesses of chess. Nevertheless all the pieces come to natural squares and so, despite its lack of venom, it is clearly not bad.

5...a6 Aiming to retain the bishop and make some sort of a fight out of it. Grischuk played 5...d6 against Karjakin in round three.

6.♘d5 ♘xd5 7.♙xd5 d6 8.♙e3 The natural move, trying to make ...a7-a6 a bit pointless.

8...♙xe3 9.fxe3 0-0 10.0-0



“As you can see from the opening, I was rather tired of sharp games and wanted to play a normal and safe game with an

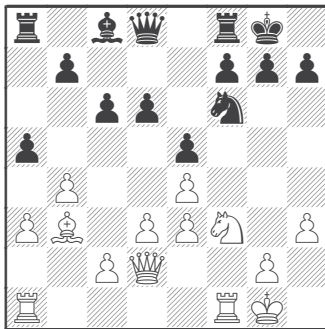
equal position. But it seems whatever I do lately, it starts to get crazy. I don't know why, how? It is difficult to imagine how you can get such a mess out of the opening, but still I managed it. I guess I should not even try...” Kramnik.

10...♘b8!? Something like 10...♙e6 would get him on the path to equalising the game, although one or two accurate moves would probably be needed to actually achieve this.

11.b4!? Played to prevent Black from playing ...♘d7-c5 and then attacking the bishop. It's a nice idea, but my feeling is that the downside of giving Black targets on the queenside is greater. Nevertheless the position remains roughly even. Also 11.♙e1!? is a possibility.

11...♘d7 12.♙d2 Again 12.♙e1, heading for g3, is more natural, but Kramnik wanted flexibility and to double rooks on the f-file.

12...c6 13.♙b3 a5 14.a3 ♘f6 15.h3



15...h6 It is noteworthy that Aronian constantly chooses the sharpest options whenever he has the chance. For example, here he could have played 15...

axb4 16.axb4 ♙xa1 with even chances.

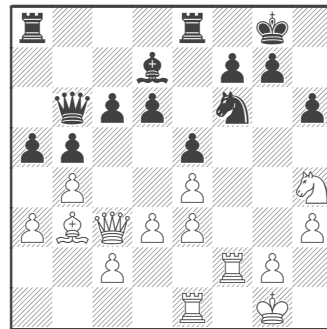
16.♙ab1!? It is hard to understand what Kramnik was thinking, but interesting to guess. At this point I believe he wanted to double rooks and so, in the meantime, decided to overprotect his b-pawn. 16.♙ae1 was also natural.

16...b5!? Aronian is trying to expand on the queenside.

17.♙c3!? ♙d7 18.♙f2 ♙b6 It would be very interesting to try 18...c5!? 19.bxc5 ♙c8, when I prefer Black's chances. Overall, White seems to be preparing for an attack that will not materialize unless he can gain a tempo or two.

19.♙e1 ♙fe8 I find it more natural to play 19...a4!? 20.♙a2 ♙ae8 21.♘h4 ♙e6 22.♙xe6 ♙xe6, when at some point Black is ready for ...♘h7 and ...d6-d5 in the right order. I prefer Black, but not by much. A draw is by far the most likely result.

20.♘h4



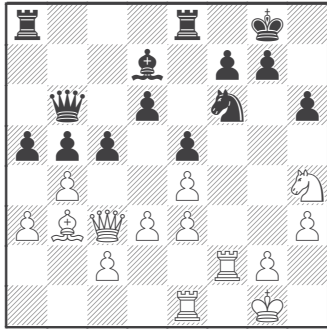
20...c5!? Again the sharpest attempt. 20...a4 21.♙a2 ♙e6 would have neutralised the game and meant playing for a draw. But Aronian felt it would be



Vladimir Kramnik vs. Levon Aronian,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018.  
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

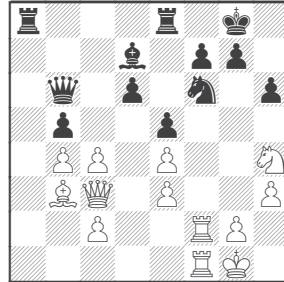


more enterprising to go for a sharp fight. Possibly Black is better here, but if this is how he had wanted to play then he would have gone for it on the previous move.



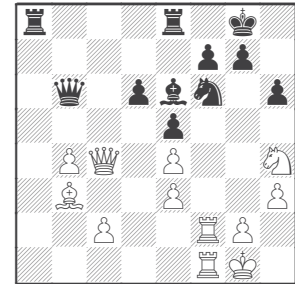
**21.♖f1!!** Kramnik accepts the challenge. Upon 21.♖f1? gxf6 an important point is that after 22.♖f1? Black has 22...c4! 23.dxc4 axb4 24.axb4 bxc4 25.♗xc4 ♖ac8! when Black is winning on account of 26.♗d3 ♖xc4 27.♗xc4 ♗b5 and the

compensation is gone. **21...cxb4!?** This game is so complicated that everything is possible at most turns. Here for example: 21...axb4 22.axb4 c4! leads to intricate complications. For example: 23.dxc4



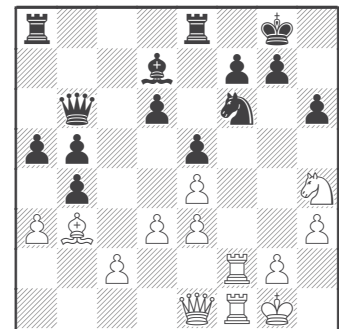
23...bxc4 (23...♗xe4? loses to 24.c5! ♗e6 25.cxb6 ♗xc3 26.♗xe6 fxe6 27.♗g6 ♖eb8 28.♖f7! ♗e2+ (28...♖xb6 29.♖d7! ♗h7 30.♗f8+ ♗g8 31.♖ff7! and wins) 29.♗h2 ♗f4 30.♖c7! ♗xg6 31.b7 and

White wins.) 24.♗xc4 (24.♗xc4 ♖ac8 is fine for Black.) 24...♗e6

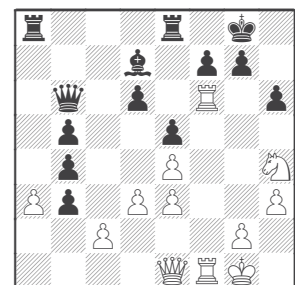


At this point 25.♗d3 would have been equal, but Kramnik considered 25.♗e2?! with the idea 25...♗xe4 26.♖xf7! ♗g3? 27.♖f3 ♗xf1 28.♖f8+! ♖xf8 29.♗xe6+ ♗h8 (29...♗h7 30.♗e4+ with mate) 30.♗g6+ ♗h7 31.♗xf8+ ♖xf8 32.♖xf8 and White wins. But after 26...d5! none of this would happen and Black remains with a sizeable advantage. Kramnik demonstrated this line but overlooked 26...d5, although had he been nearer to that position in his calculations, I doubt he would have missed it. At this point he is just trying to come up with ideas rather than draw definite conclusions.

**22.♗e1!**



**22...d5** I have had to cut out so many options that I have analysed in this game, but the following line is particularly interesting. 22...a4 23.♖xf6 axb3!

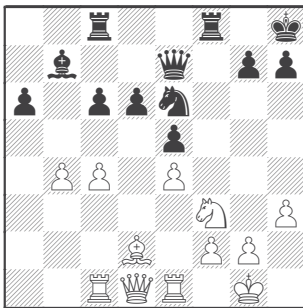


## 02 | SIMPLE DECISIONS

### WEAKNESSES

**Grischuk 2767 - Aronian 2794**

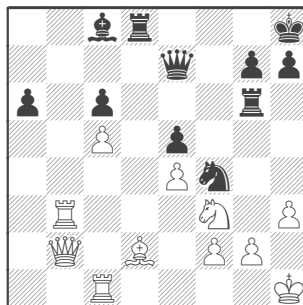
Round 12,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018



The principled move was **23.c5!** This fixes weaknesses all over Black's position, as well as disrupting the b7-bishop's path back into the game. The game actually continued: 23.♗e3?! c5! 24.bxc5 ♗xc5 25.♗xc5 ♖xc5. White's position appears to be rather more pleasant, but in reality Black has only one weakness and it is easy to defend. The game was drawn on move 54. **23...dxc5 24.bxc5 ♖cd8** This was

the only chance. After 24...♗xc5?? 25.♗b4 or 24...♗f4? 25.♗xf4 ♖xf4 26.♗d6 White would win. However, Grischuk explained at the press conference that he could not find a way to continue here and gave up trying. Not surprisingly it turns out that he does have chances here.

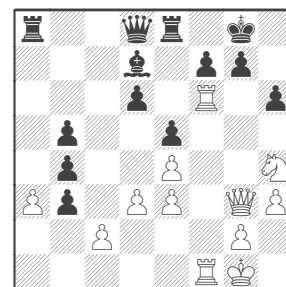
**25.♖e3!** 25.♖c2 ♗c8 26.♗e2±. **25...♗f4** If 25...♗xc5 26.♗c2 ♗e6 27.♗a5 ♖de8 28.♗c3 and White wins his pawn back with a large advantage. **26.♗c2 ♖f6 27.♗b2 ♖g6 28.♖b3! ♗c8 29.♗h1**



White has a great advantage since if **29...♗xg2** then **30.♗xe5** and White wins.

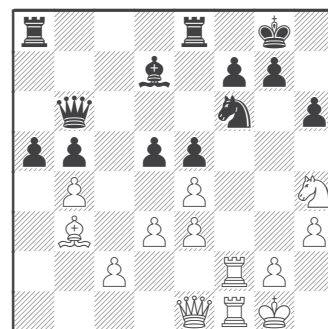
24. ♖g3 (24. ♖xf7? fails beautifully to 24... ♗d8! 25. ♗g3 ♗g5! 26. ♗xg5 hxg5 27. ♖xd7 ♖f8! when White has too many problems to solve, among others the impending promotion of the black pawns. For example: 28. ♖f5 b2! 29. ♖xg7+ ♖h8 30. ♖xg5 bxa3 31. ♖h2 ♖a7! and Black wins.)

A funny line is 24... ♗d8 (24... ♖f8 25. cxb3 bxa3 is close to winning for Black, but White holds on after 26. ♖xh6 a2 27. ♖a1 ♗c5 28. ♖h5! ♗c3 29. ♖g5! ♗xa1+ 30. ♖h2 ♗e1!? 31. ♖xg7+ ♖h8 32. ♗g5! ♗xh4! 33. ♗xh4+ ♖xg7 34. ♗g5+ with a draw by perpetual check.)



25. ♖xh6 bxc2 26. ♖xf7! c1 ♖+ 27. ♖h2 ♖xf7 28. ♗g6+ ♖g8 and White has to force a draw with 29. ♗h5!, as after 29. ♗h7+? ♖f8 30. ♖g6 ♗f6!! 31. ♖xf6+ ♖e7 the black king dances away.

**23. axb4** Kramnik rejected 23. ♖xf6 gxf6 24. ♖xd5? (24. axb4 is very similar to the game) on account of 24... bxa3!, when White's attack on the kingside is not quick enough to justify the investment.



**23... dxe4!** 23... a4 was presented by Peter Svidler in his post-match commentary as a possible cop-out for Black, pointing out that White would be better after 24. ♖xd5. But far more natural would be to play 24. ♖xf6! gxf6 25. ♖xd5 and the attack is simply overwhelming. White is in no hurry to prove his advantage and would continue c2-c4 with a later possibility of dislodging the queen from its active position.

**24. bxa5** One of many lines considered by the players was 24. ♖xf6 gxf6 25. ♗g3+ ♖f8, when 26. ♖g6+? (26. bxa5 would keep things complicated.) 26... fxg6 27. ♗xg6 fails to 27... ♖e7! and the attack is over.

**24... ♖xa5** 24... ♗xa5? 25. ♗d1! followed by ♖xf6 and ♗h5 looks desperately dangerous for Black.

**25. ♖g6!!** A fantastic move. Kramnik was tired of variations where the king was able to run away. On the other hand 25. ♖xf6 leads to nothing special.

**25... ♖e6** Also possible was 25... exd3, when after 26. ♖xf6 gxf6 27. ♗g3 ♖a7

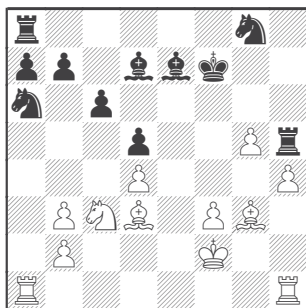
## 04 | STRATEGIC DECISION

### STRATEGIC MOMENTS

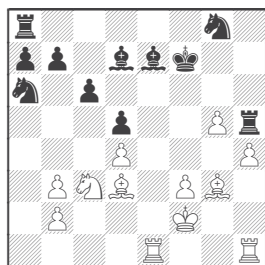
Kramnik spoiled a number of potential masterpieces in Berlin. This is one of them.

#### Kramnik 2800 - So 2799

Round 12,  
Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

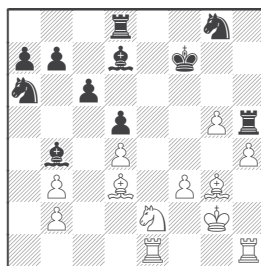


**20. ♖xa6?!** This conceded White an advantage, but not enough to guarantee a win. 20. ♖e2 was Matthew Sadler's idea. But after 20... ♖b4! 21. ♖g6+!? ♖xg6 22. ♖f4+ ♖h7 23. ♖xh5 c5! Black has a lot of counterplay. The correct idea was beautiful: 20. ♖ae1!

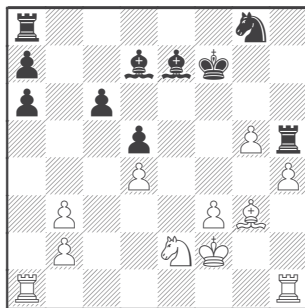


...with the idea of ♖e2 and where White can always answer ... ♖b4 with ♖b1, when the knight is entirely out of

play on b4 but the bishop is perfectly placed on b1. 20... ♖e8 (20... ♖d8 21. ♖e2 is similar.) shows the potential of White's position. There are several good moves here, such as 21. ♖g2!?. 21. ♖e2 is also strong, whereas Black cannot improve his position at all. Then if 21... ♖d8 22. ♖e2 ♖b4



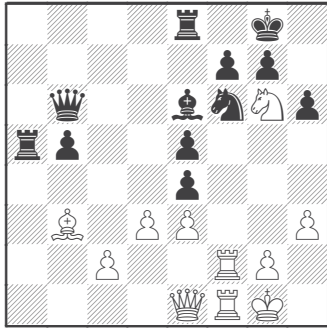
23. ♖f4! ♖xe1 24. ♖xe1 ♖h8 25. ♖g6! ♖h5 26. ♖e5+ ♖g7 27. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 28. ♖e5+ ♖f8 29. ♖g3 and, amazingly, White is completely winning. The extra rook matters little as none of the black pieces are contributing to the play at all. **20... bxa6 21. ♖e2**



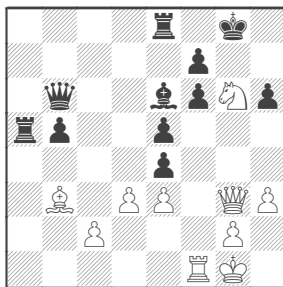
**21... ♖d8?!** 21... ♖f8! 22. ♖e5 ♖g7± was the right defense.

**22. ♖e5±** Kramnik continued to have chances, but the game ended in a draw on move 42.

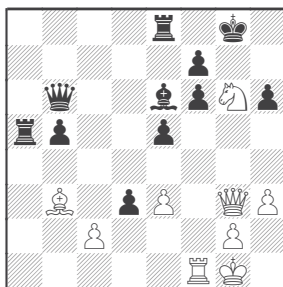
28.cxd3 f5 29.♖xe5+ ♔f8 30.d4 White has enough compensation for the exchange.



**26.♖xe5** This is the only move Kramnik made in the middlegame that I don't really like. The strongest continuation was 26.♖xf6 gxf6 27.♖g3! (27.♖xf6 ♔g7! 28.♖f2 ♖a7 would be the sort of thing Aronian was hoping for. White's attack is failing and he is the exchange down.)

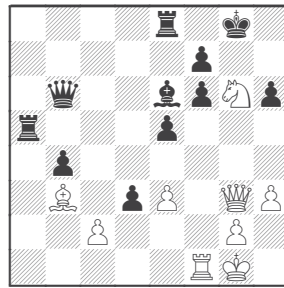


The position is now deeply complicated and Aronian would have had the big challenge of finding 27...b4!! when Black walks a narrow line. (Other moves here fail badly. 27...♙xb3? 28.♖xe5+! and 29.♖d7; 27...♙h7 28.♖xf6 ♖d8 29.♖f2! f×g6 30.♙xe6 is very dangerous for Black, e.g. 30...exd3 31.♖xg6! and mate is near. 27...exd3? also ends badly:



White has 28.♖xf6 d2 29.♖e7+ ♔f8 30.♖f5! d1♖+ 31.♙h2 ♖e7 32.♙xe6 ♖xe6 33.♖g7+ ♔e8 34.♖xe6 ♖xe6

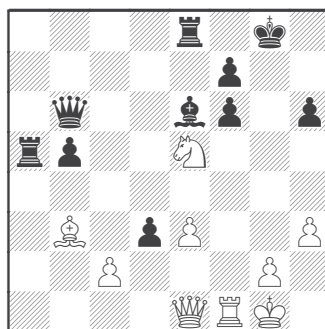
35.♖g8+ ♔d7 36.♖xf7+ ♔d8 37.♖xe6 ♖d7 38.♖xh6 where he can press on for a win with decent chances of succeeding.)



28.♖h4+ (28.♖xf6? looks absolutely winning, but after 28...♔g7!! 29.♖xe6 ♖xe6 30.♖xe5+ ♖g6! 31.♖f4 ♖f6 32.♖g4+ ♔h8 White is running out of ammo.) 28...♙h7 29.♖xf6 ♖d8! 30.♖f2 ♙xb3 31.cxb3 ♖f8 32.dxe4 and although Stockfish may be able to claim equality with very accurate defence, I am less confident in Black's defensive chances.

**26...exd3!** Sharpest. 26...♖d5 would have kept the balance in a simpler way, although one presumes Kramnik would have played 27.♖xf7 ♙xf7 28.♖xf7 ♖xe5 29.♖g3 ♙xf7 30.♖xe5, which however also leads to a draw in a multitude of ways. There is of course no chance of a top player like Aronian making a mistake like 26...♙xb3?? 27.♖xf6! gxf6?! 28.♖d7 and White wins.

**27.♖xf6 gxf6**



**28.♖xf6** The sharpest. 28.♖g3+ ♔f8 29.♖g6+ ♔g7 would lead to an immediate draw.

**28...d2!** The only move, but not a hard one to find.

**29.♖g3+!** 29.♖xd2?! fails to 29...♖a1+ 30.♙f2 ♖a5! and White has to go into a bad endgame.

**29...♙f8!** 29...♙h7?? would fail to 30.c4! and ♙c2+.

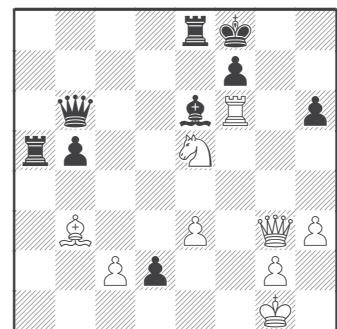


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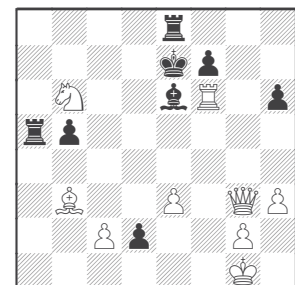
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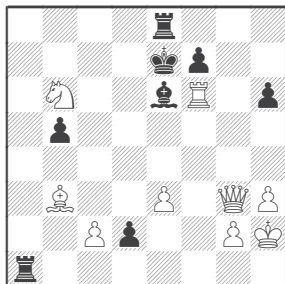


**30.♖f1!** Kramnik shows great accuracy again and again. He considered 30.♖d7+?! ♔e7 31.♖xb6

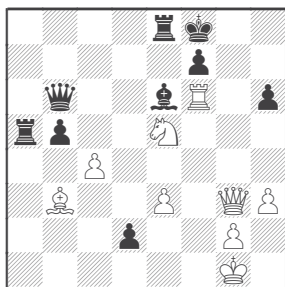




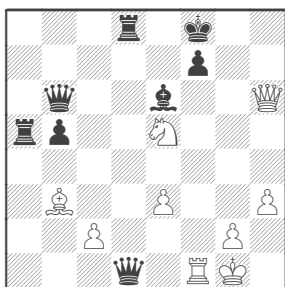
... but rejected it on account of 31...♖a1+! (31...d1♖+? would have been a disaster. After 32.♖f1 ♖d6 33.♖h4+ ♔f8 34.♖xh6+ ♔e7 35.♖f6+ ♔f8 36.♔c8! ♖xc8 37.♙xe6 ♖c7 38.♖h8+ ♔e7 39.♙xf7 Black is left with no defence.) 32.♔h2



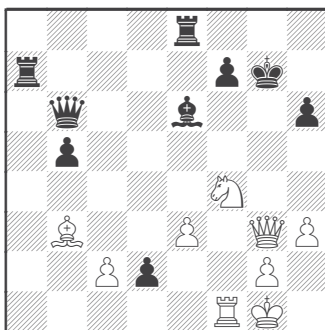
32...♖h1+! (32...d1♖?! 33.♖xe6+ ♟e6 34.♖c7+ gives White an attack. The computer can hold it together, just. A human could not.) 33.♔xh1 d1♖+ 34.♔h2 ♔xf6 35.♖f4+ ♔g7 36.♖e5+ ♔f8 and White may end up missing his sacrificed pawn in the near future. He also considered 30.c4?



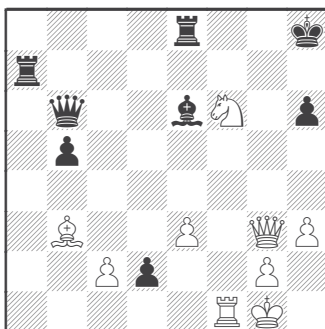
... which is quite dangerous for Black, but Kramnik had understood that Black should take the chance to escape the kill zone with 30...♔e7! when White does not have enough compensation for the exchange. 30...♖a7!? Again, the sharpest. 30...♖d8! was drawing immediately. The critical line was 31.♖f4! d1♖ 32.♖xh6+



32...♔g8! and White gives perpetual check. The alternative 32...♔e7? is obviously risky. 33.♖f6+ ♔e8 34.♖h8+ ♔e7 35.♔g6+! ♟xg6 36.♖f6+ ♔e8 37.♖f8+ ♔d7 38.♖xd1+ and “White is a bit better here” – Peter Svidler. This only makes sense if you include the essential novotny-defence 38...♙d5!, otherwise White is just winning. Still, White has a great position after 39.♖f7+ ♔c8 40.♙xd5±, with an attack. 31.♔g6+ ♔g7 32.♔f4+

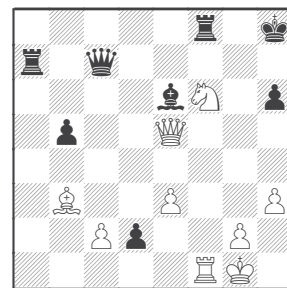


32...♔h8! 32...♔f8? loses to the direct 33.♔xe6+ ♖xe6 34.♙xe6 ♖xe6 35.♖b8+, while 32...♔h7? 33.♔h5 ♙g4 does not work here as after 34.♖xg4 ♖xe3+ 35.♔h1 ♖g5 White has an additional check on f6, winning a rook. 33.♔h5 ♟f6 Only move according to the players, but another weird option existed: 33...♙g4!? 34.♖xg4 ♖xe3+ also worked, but is a more tactical way and not something a GM would choose. The main line could be 35.♔h1 ♖g8 (35...♖e5!?) 36.♖h4 ♖a6 37.c3 ♖ag6 38.♙c2 ♔xg2 39.♖f6+ ♖2g7 40.♔xg7 ♖xh3+ with a perpetual. 34.♔xf6

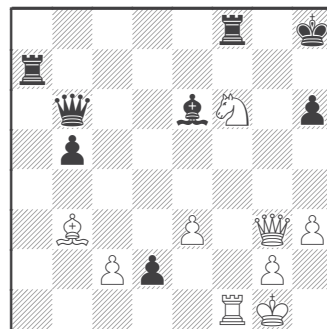


34...♖f8 Neither of the players saw 34...♖d8 35.♖f4 ♙f5!! before discussing the game at the press conference. After 36.♖xf5 d1♖ it is White who has to find the draw: 37.♖f4! ♖h7 38.♖xd1 ♖xd1+

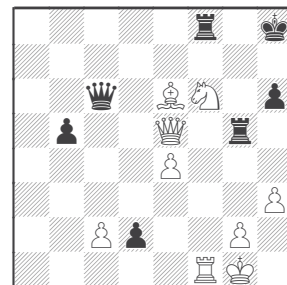
39.♔h2 and the simplest is 39...♖d6! with a drawn endgame that only White can attempt to lose. Also 34...♖ee7? 35.♖f4! would put Black under desperate pressure. 35.♖f4 To understand what happened in the game, it is important to know that 35.♖e5 is well met with 35...♖c7!, when Black is okay.



For example: 36.♖xe6 ♖e7 37.♖d5 ♖a6 and Black equalises as he either recovers a piece or has a pretty defence against 38.♔d7!?, i.e. 38...♖xf1+ 39.♔xf1 ♖a1+ 40.♔f2 d1♔+! 41.♔f3 ♖xe3+ 42.♔g4 and Black has perpetual check or a drawn endgame after 42...♖g5+.

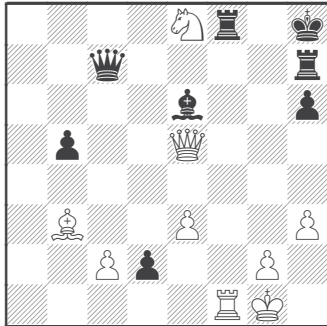


35...♖h7 36.♖e5 ♖c7?? A sign of a player who is off form. The game could have ended in a draw after 36...♖g7 37.♙xe6 ♖c6, for example 38.e4 (38.♙g4 d1♖ with material equality) 38...♖g5



39.♔e8+! (39.♖a1 ♖c5+ and 40...♖e5

would risk getting into trouble.) 39...♖xe5 40.♗xf8+ ♔h7 41.♗f7+ and Black has to play 41...♔h8 allowing a perpetual, as if he goes forward he will get mated. 37.♘e8+



If 37...♗xe5 38.♗xf8+ ♔g8 39.♗xg8 mate. **Black resigned**

Peter Svidler argued that the game would not have been played in this fashion if one or both of the players were still in contention for first place. We have seen from Kramnik that he is currently playing entirely fearless chess. And Aronian's desire to fight would no doubt have been the same if he needed

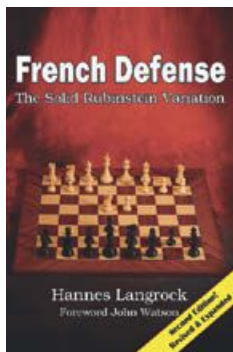


to win games to win the tournament. In this way the game compares well to their exceptional masterpiece in the London Candidates 2013, where Kramnik won with Black against Aronian in a long and hard fought game. ■

▲ Vladimir Kramnik with fans, Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

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# The Three Pillars of Endgame Technique

WE OFTEN HEAR THE PHRASE, "IT'S A MATTER OF TECHNIQUE." BUT HOW MANY PEOPLE KNOW WHAT "TECHNIQUE" ACTUALLY IS?

By **GM ALEX FISHBEIN** |||

**O**ften see "technique" used synonymously with "endgame", or in a context implying that it is just a technicality. In fact, technique is an important skill to learn, and learning it is difficult without knowing what it is.

Technique is essentially something that does not require calculating many moves ahead, or deep planning. I view endgame technique as comprising three main facets:

- #1 Eliminating opponent's counterplay
- #2 Simple and crisp tactics
- #3 Converting into a known position

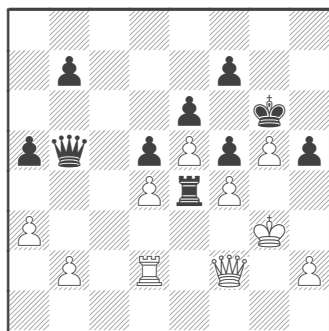
These are my three pillars of technique, and let's delve into each one.

## TECHNIQUE PILLAR #1: Eliminating Opponent's Counterplay

Aron Nimzowitsch

Jose Raul Capablanca

New York 1927



Capablanca is usually the starting point of any study of technique. He perfected the art of eliminating all counterplay, in particular in closed positions. He would gain space and squeeze the position until his opponent suffocated from the absence of moves:

**37...♔c4!** White's rook and queen are tied down to the d4-pawn.

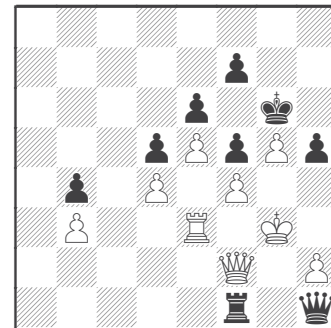
**38.♕g2 b5!** Gaining space, and squares, on the queenside.

**39.♕g1 b4 40.axb4 axb4 41.♕g2 ♔c1 42.♕g3 ♔h1** Further limiting the scope of White's pieces.

**43.♖d3 ♖e1!** Threatening ...♖f1, against which White only has a temporary defense.

**44.♖f3 ♖d1 45.b3 45.♕h4 ♖b1** is also hopeless.

**45...♖c1 46.♖e3** Or **46.♕h4 ♖c2!**  
**46...♖f1**

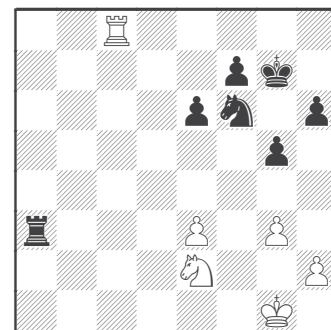


On 47.♔e2 ♔g1+ with mate coming soon.

**White resigned**

|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| Varuzhan Akobian | 2647 |
| Sam Shankland    | 2671 |

Round 6, US Championship,  
St. Louis 2018



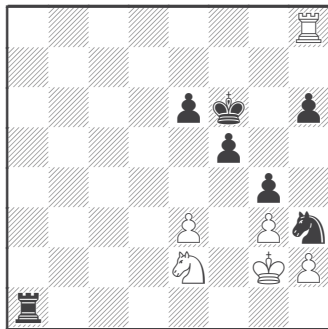
It is sacrilegious to compare anyone to Capablanca, but I have often seen the new US Champion, Sam Shankland, apply the squeeze in the endgame. Here, he totally deprives his opponent of moves, leading to checkmate, even with limited material.

**39.♖c3 ♖a1+** Of course, Sam does not trade rooks with 39...♖xc3, even though that is probably also winning. With rooks on, White's defense of his weak pawns is much more difficult.



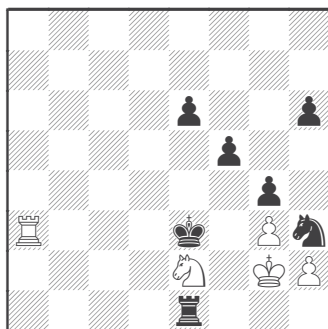


40.♔g2 ♖a2 41.♔f1 ♜e4 42.♞d3 g4!  
Gaining more space and more squares.  
43.♞d4 f5 44.♞d3 ♔f6 45.♞d8 ♜g5  
46.♞h8 ♞a1+ 47.♔g2 ♜h3!



And that's it! Only the knight on e2 can defend against the mate on g1, and the rook must return to defend the knight, after which it will be immobile also.

48.♞b8 ♞e1 49.♞b2 ♔e5 50.♞a2 ♔e4  
51.♞a4+ ♔xe3 52.♞a3+



52...♔e4! When using the squeeze method, you have to be careful of stalemate tricks. 52...♔xe2?? 53.♞e3+! ♔d2 54.♞d3+! is a draw by the "mad rook".

53.♞a2 ♔e5 54.♞b2 ♔f6 55.♞a2 e5  
56.♞a6+ ♔g5 57.♞a2 ♔h5 58.♞b2 f4  
59.gxf4 ♞xe2+

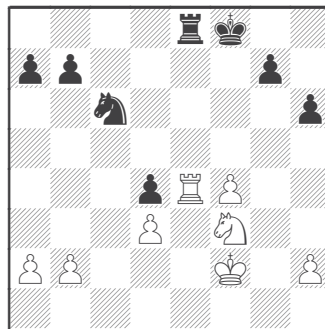
The US Champion made it look easy, but it takes a lot of talent and skill to do this.

**White resigned**

Jose Raul Capablanca

Richard Reti

New York 1924



Preventing counterplay comes in more flavors than just squeezing, and let us return to the past for another example from the third world champion.

27.♜e5 ♜xe5 28.fxex5 In his tournament book, Alekhine evaluates this position as already winning for White, but a modern look shows otherwise. Let's break this position down logically: Black wants to make three moves, ...♞d8, ...♔f7, and ...♔e6, after which White's pawn will be immobile, and the rook stuck behind the pawn. Can White prevent it? Capa came up with an idea: When Black has played ...♔f7 and ...♞d8, he wants to play ♞g4, and then move the king to e4. It is all about preventing the opponent's resources: after ♞g4, Black can no longer play ...♔e6. But now let us take it a step further: can Black stop this plan by White? Yes, he can play 27...♞d8 28.♔f3 ♞d5! Now 29.♞g4 is useless, and the rook is stuck defending the pawn. White has no advantage.

28...♔f7?! 29.♔f3 ♞d8? It was still possible to save this ending with 29...g5 30.♞xd4 ♞xe5 31.♞d7+ ♔f6 32.♞xb7 ♞f5+; although a pawn down, Black

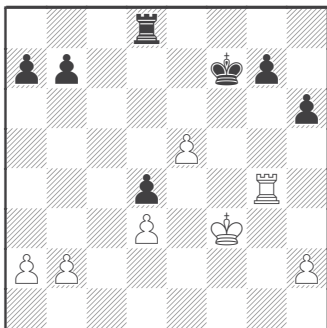


**Alex Fishbein** is an American grandmaster, residing in New Jersey. He was the winner of the inaugural Denker Tournament of High School Champions in 1985. He won several national and international tournaments in the 1990s, including in Denmark and Norway, and became a grandmaster in 1992. He then began a career in finance but continued to compete in his spare time, including four times in the U.S. Championship in the 2000s.

He is known for his endgame knowledge, having won the Best Endgame Prize in the 2004 U.S. Championship and written a well-received book on pawn endings in 1993.

should be able to draw this. But Reti seems to have just missed Capablanca's next move. He was not carefully looking at his opponent's resources.

30. ♖g4!

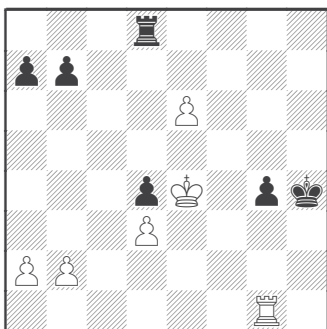


Now Black has serious problems, as the white king comes in to dominate in the center.

30... ♗g5 31. h4! The move order is crucial: 31. ♔e4? ♗e6 32. h4 ♖d5! 33. h×g5 ♖×e5+ 34. ♔xd4 h×g5, and only Black can be better.

31... ♔g6 32. h×g5 h×g5? The last chance was 32... h5 33. ♖g1 ♔f5 34. g6 ♔×e5 35. ♖g5+ ♔f6 36. ♖×h5 ♔×g6, but this is very difficult for Black.

33. ♔e4 ♔h5 34. ♖g1 ♔h4 35. e6 g4



36. e7 Much cleaner is 36. ♔e5 g3 37. e7 ♖g8 38. ♔d6 ♔h3 39. ♖e1 g2 40. e8 ♖.

**Black resigned** after 36.e7, a bit prematurely, although after 36... ♖e8 37. ♔f5 ♖×e7 38. ♖×g4+ ♔h5 39. ♖xd4 White will win.

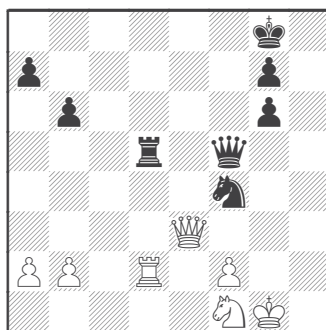
This example was more complicated. We saw that White's main technical device was ♖g4, which stopped Black activating his king. Black, in turn, needed to exercise technique in preventing that prevention, with the precise move order, 28... ♖d8 instead of 28... ♔f7. It is not easy, even for a grandmaster, to think in this way,

although the variations themselves are simple, and only a couple moves deep. This takes us to:

## TECHNIQUE PILLAR #2: Simple and Crisp Tactics

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Ljubomir Ljubojevic | 2615 |
| Anatoly Karpov      | 2690 |

European Team Championship,  
Moscow 1977



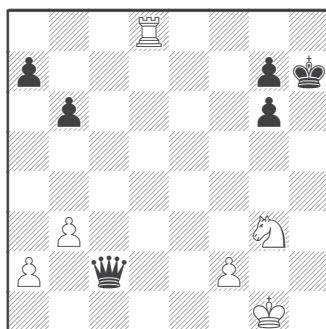
Anatoly Karpov practically personified crisp tactics. Of the many examples, I have chosen two that also relate closely with our first theme: paying attention to what the opponent wants to do.

37. ♖xf4? In this case, it is clear what White is up to: he is not forced to give up his queen, but thinks he can build a fortress if he does.

37... ♖xf4 38. ♖xd5 ♖g4+! 38... ♖c4? 39. ♖d8+ ♔h7 40. b3 ♖e4 41. ♖d2 with a fortress was White's calculation.

39. ♔g3 39. ♔h2 ♖c4 is even worse.

39... ♖c4! 40. ♖d8+ ♔h7 41. b3 ♖c2



White loses a pawn on the queenside, after which the rest is, well... really a matter of technique.

42. ♔g2 g5 43. ♖d6 ♖xa2 44. ♔e4 ♖a5!

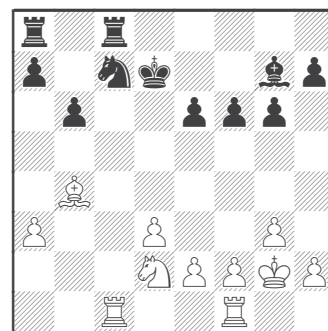
Karpov wants no part of a mating net after 44... ♖xb3?!, and 44... g6 45. ♖d7+ ♔h6 46. ♔f6 is also not to his taste.

45. ♔f3 ♖f5+ 46. ♔e3 ♖b5 47. ♔d4 g4 48. ♔e3 ♖xb3+ 49. ♔f4 ♖f3+ 50. ♔e5 ♖f8 51. ♔g5+ ♔g8 52. ♔e4 b5 53. ♖e6 b4

**White resigned**

|                |      |
|----------------|------|
| Robert Huebner | 2600 |
| Anatoly Karpov | 2690 |

Tilburg 1977

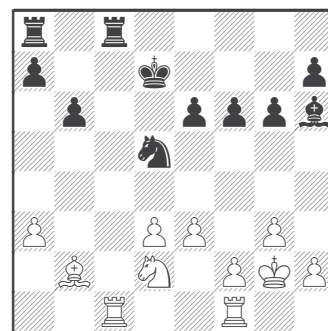


Here is one of my favorite examples of technique: both good technique on the part of the winner, and bad technique by his rival.

21. ♔c3? White has a reasonable position (with 21. ♔c4 ♔d5 22. ♖b1!), but he totally misses the key idea: Black will exchange two minor pieces for a rook and two pawns.

21... ♔d5 22. ♔b2? A grave technical error, and one that was not pointed out by either Karpov or Huebner in their annotations. As we shall soon see, 22. ♔a1 is necessary.

22... ♔h6! 23. e3 23. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 24. ♔c4 b5 hopelessly surrenders the c-file.



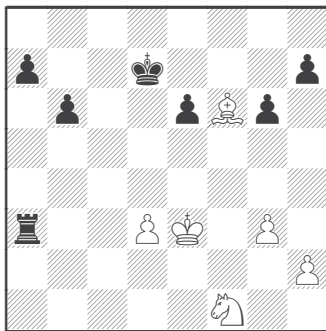
23... ♔xe3! Of course, a rook and two pawns are stronger than two minor pieces

in the endgame.

**24.fxe3** ♖xe3+ **25.♔f3** ♖xf1 Now we see why the bishop needed to go to a1. White wants to at least keep a pair of rooks, which he cannot do now because of ...♖c2.

**26.♖xf1** ♖xc1 **27.♙xc1** ♖c8! Good technique here: Black sees that White is trying to cover all the entry squares along the c-file with ♖e3. He can give up the f6-pawn if he can capture the more valuable a3-pawn.

**28.♙b2** ♖c2! **29.♙xf6** ♖a2 **30.♙e3** ♖xa3

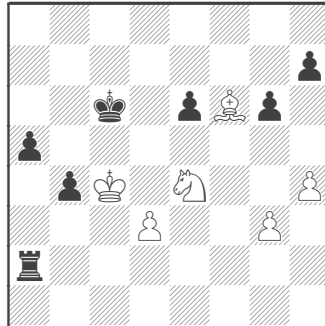


Black is winning, because the bishop and knight will have difficulty against two passed pawns on the side.

**31.♖d2** b5 **32.♖e4** b4?! Karpov awards this move a full question mark, noting that White takes the c4-square and gains counterplay against the rook. 32... a5 immediately was better technique.

**33.♙d4** a5 **34.♙c4** ♖a2! The only move, as White was threatening to trap the rook with 35.♙b2.

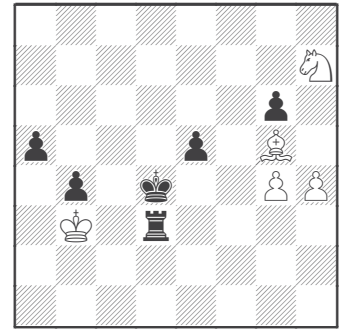
**35.h4** ♙c6



Even after his mistake, Black still has

excellent winning chances. He just needs to find a way to make room for his king.

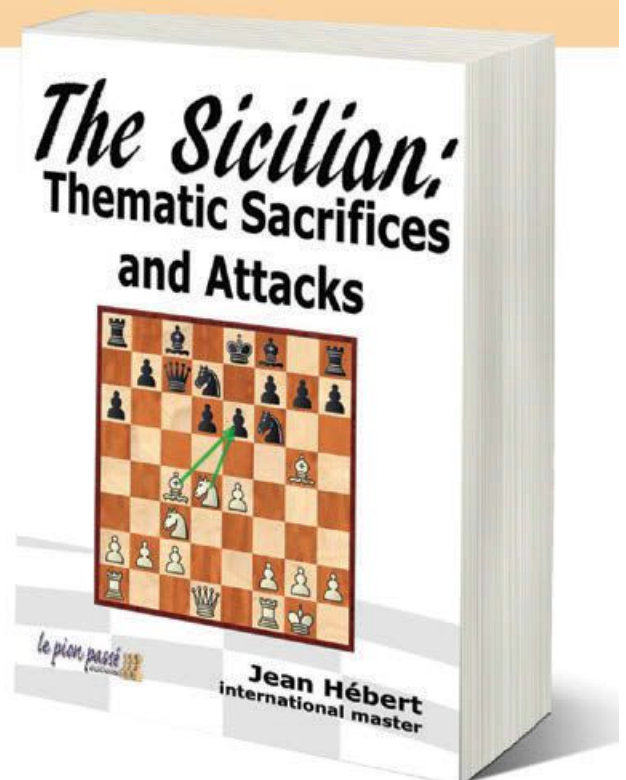
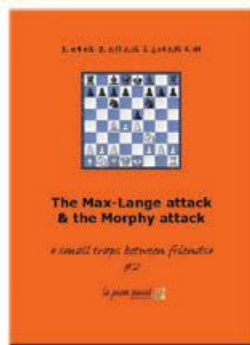
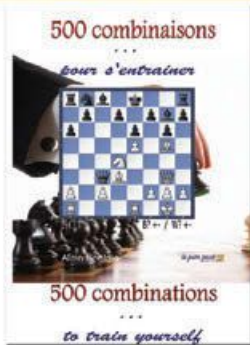
**36.♙d4** ♖e2 **37.♙e5** ♖e1 **38.♙f6** ♖b1 **39.♙e7** e5 **40.g4** ♖c1+! **41.♙b3** ♙d5 **42.♙g5** ♖b1+ **43.♙c2** ♖h1 **44.♙b3** ♖h3 **45.♖f6+** ♙d4 **46.♖xh7** ♖xd3+



**47.♙c2** a4 **48.♙e7** ♖c3+ **49.♙b1** ♖c7

Again, neither side really had to calculate very far, but just to see the immediate future clearly.

**White resigned**



**CHESS FOR FUN.**

**CHESS TO LEARN.**

**ASK TO YOUR BOOKSHOP.**

© Fotolia

le pion passé



[www.lepionpasse.com](http://www.lepionpasse.com)

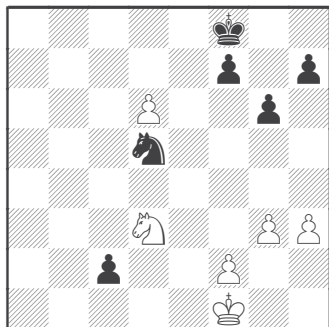
le pion passé



Daniel Clancy 2267

Alex Fishbein 2567

Maryland Open 2018



My next example is a cautionary tale. It is good to learn what not to do, in addition to learning what is right. I want to share a recent failure of my own: a case where I did not look at my opponent's resources.

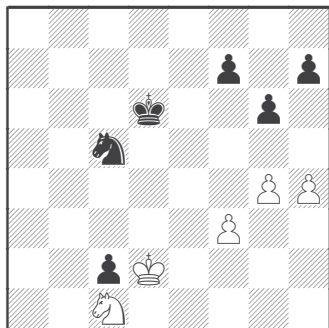
I have a clear advantage here, as my pawn will take time and effort to capture, but my king can take the d6-pawn on the way to centralization.

**38...♖c3!** So far, so good. The more obvious **38...♖b4?** would be a serious mistake: **39.♖c1 ♗e8 40.♗e2 ♖d7 41.♖d2 ♖xd6 42.♖c3 ♖c5 43.♖b3+ ♖b5 44.♖d4+ ♖c5 45.♖b3+** and the only way to avoid the perpetual is with a piece sacrifice, which is not enough to win.

**39.♗e1 ♖e4!** Now, however, I am able to buy time, as his king cannot immediately approach my pawn.

**40.g4 ♗e8 41.h4?** White is trying to keep all his pawns, but it is not realistic. **41.f3** would offer serious drawing chances, with a likely three vs two ending with knights.

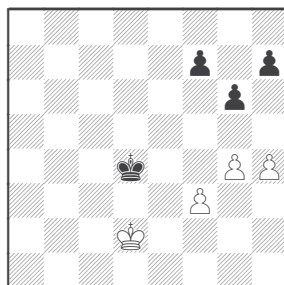
**41...♖c5! 42.♖c1 ♖d7 43.f3 ♖xd6 44.♖d2**



White is finally about to take the pawn. Now I had to make a decision.

**44...♖d7?** A basic error in technique: I

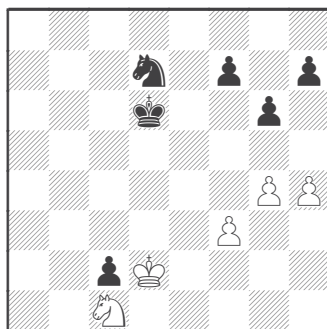
totally failed to appreciate White's next move. I only considered **45.♖xc2 ♖e5**, not realizing that after **45.♖d3** first, my knight is stymied. The win was there with **44...♗e5! 45.♖e2 ♖b3+! 46.♖xc2 ♖d4+ 47.♖xd4 ♖xd4 48.♖d2**



**48...f6!!** The only way to win: the idea is that White is threatening **g5**, but if I can play **...f5**, that is harmless. Now: **49.♗e2 (49.h5 gxh5 50.gxh5 f5 51.♗e2 f4 52.♖d2 h6! this is why my f-pawn had to go only one square at first) 49... f5! 50.g5 (50.♖d2 fxg4 51.fxg4 ♗e4) 50...♖c3! 51.♗e3 ♖c2 52.♗e2 (52.♗f4 ♖d3 53.h5 ♖d4) 52...f4!**

I saw the pawn ending, and it was unclear to me at first. I had twenty minutes left for the rest of the game, and decided to see if I had anything better. It is forgivable to fail to calculate the pawn ending, but it is a grievous sin to forget to check what the opponent can do in response to the alternative.

Incidentally, this is a good example of winning by liquidating into the pawn ending, and my fellow endgame connoisseur and ACM contributor Joel Benjamin has written an excellent book on this topic, "Liquidation on the Chess Board: Mastering the Transition into the Pawn Ending." Joel, please feel free to use this example in your second edition!



**45.♖d3!** All I had to do is see this move,

and the next one. I would have then easily discarded **44...♖d7**.

**45...♖e5 46.♖e1!** Now it's just a dead draw, although I managed to win the game anyway after a major blunder by my opponent in severe time trouble. The game continued:

**46...h5 47.gxh5 gxh5 48.♖xc2 ♖g6 49.♖g2 ♗e5 50.♖d2 ♖f4 51.♖e3 ♖d5 52.♖c4+ 52.♖xd5?? ♖xd5** was not going to happen, of course.

**52...♗f4 53.♗e2 ♖e7 54.♖d6 f5 55.♗f2 ♖g6 56.♖e8 ♖xh4 57.♖g7 ♗g5 58.f4+?? 58.♖e6+ ♗f6 59.♖f4 ♗g5 60.♖e6+ ♗h6 61.♖f4** is an immediate draw.

**58...♗g4 59.♗e3**

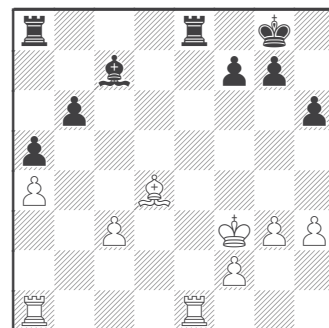
White resigned

## TECHNIQUE PILLAR #3: Converting to a Known Endgame

Magnus Carlsen 2843

Fabiano Caruana 2773

Grand Slam Final, Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012



Our last technical device is converting to a known endgame. I would like to close with a game by the best technician of all time, Magnus Carlsen, who uses this device not once but twice, against his future title challenger. I will frequently refer here to his annotations.

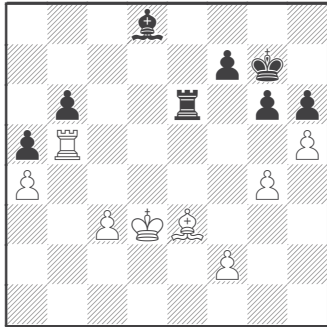
White has a clear advantage, with the two black queenside pawns vulnerable on dark squares.

**28.♖ab1 ♖ac8 29.♖e4! g6** Carlsen shows that after **29...h5 30.♖b5! g6 31.g4 hxg4+ 32.hxg4** Black has potential problems on the h-file.

**30.g4!** Now **...h5** won't be an option.



30...♙f8 31.h4 ♖xe4 32.♙e4 ♖e8+  
33.♙d3 ♖e6 34.♙e3 ♙g7 35.♖b5  
♙d8 36.h5

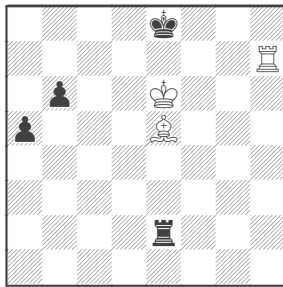


Continuing to squeeze the position. Both the h6- and b6-pawns are in trouble.

36...♖d6+ 37.♙c4 ♖c6+ 38.♙d5 ♖e6  
39.♙d4+ ♙f8 40.f4 ♙c7 41.f5 Black is already running out of air.

41...♖d6+ 42.♙e4 ♖c6 43.♖b1 ♙e8  
This allows Magnus to calculate what he calls a “more or less forced win.”

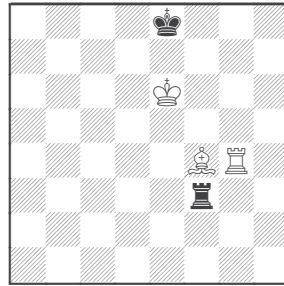
44.hxg6! fxg6 45.♖h1! ♙f7 45...gxf5+  
46.gxf5 ♙d8 47.f6! ♙xf6 48.♖xh6 ♖xc3!  
49.♙xf6! ♖a3 50.♖h7! (50.♙d5? ♙f7=)  
50...♖xa4+ 51.♙d5 ♖a2 52.♙e6 ♖e2+  
53.♙e5



...is the Philidor position in the ♖+♙ vs ♖ ending, which Carlsen knows. In his comments, he leaves it as an exercise to the reader, and we will show it: 53...♖f2 54.♖b7 ♖d2 55.♖xb6 a4 56.♖a6 a3 57.♖xa3 ♖d7 58.♖a8+ (58.♙d6?? ♖e7+=) 58...♖d8 59.♖a7 ♖d2 60.♖b7 ♖d1 (60...♖d3 61.♖e7+ ♙d8 62.♖h7 ♙c8 63.♖c7+ ♙d8 64.♖c4 ♙e8 65.♙d4! is similar to the main line) 61.♖g7 ♖f1 (61...♙f8 62.♖h7 ♖g1 63.♖c7 ♙g8 64.♖c8+ ♙h7 65.♖h8+ ♙g6 66.♖g8+) 62.♙g3! Forcing the rook to a bad place on the third rank.

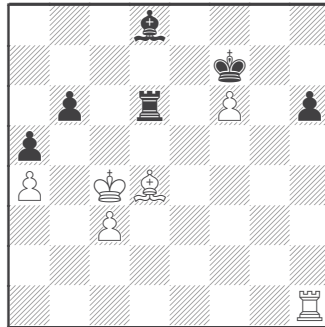
62...♖f3 (62...♙f8 63.♖g4 ♙e8 64.♖b4 ♖d1 65.♙h4! ♙f8 66.♖g4) 63.♙d6! ♖e3+ 64.♙e5 ♖f3 (64...♙f8 65.♖h7) 65.♖e7+

♙f8 (65...♙d8 66.♖b7) 66.♖a7 ♙g8  
67.♖g7+ ♙f8 68.♖g4! ♙e8 (68...♖e3  
69.♖h4) 69.♙f4!



69...♙f8 70.♙d6+.

46.♙d5 ♖d6+ 47.♙c4 gxf5 48.gxf5  
♙d8 49.f6!

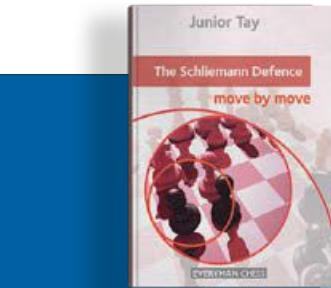


We witness Carlsen’s second conversion into a winning ending that he knows.

49...♙xf6 Of no help is 49...♙g6  
50.♖g1+ ♙f7 51.♖g7+ ♙e6 52.♖h7.  
50.♖xh6 ♙e7 51.♖xd6 ♙xd6  
52.♙b5 ♙e6 53.♙xb6 ♙d7 54.c4  
♙c8 55.♙xa5 Carlsen writes: “It only remains for White not to let Black sac the bishop for the c-pawn. I (and I suspect quite a lot of other people) knew the winning method from the famous game Fischer - Keres, Zurich 1959.”

Let me state here that I am often surprised at how poorly many modern players, even at the master level, know Bobby Fischer’s games. When I was growing up, of course, everyone knew all the games from his book, but now I am not so sure. And I seriously doubt that even if people know the game, they remember that winning method (which, in this case, is not hard to find over the board). Of course, none of this applies to Magnus Carlsen. For him, this is simple arithmetic.

55...♙b7 56.♙b4 ♙f4 57.c5 ♙a7  
58.c6 ♙b8 59.a5 ♙a7 60.a6 ♙a8



THE SCHLIEMANN DEFENCE;  
MOVE BY MOVE

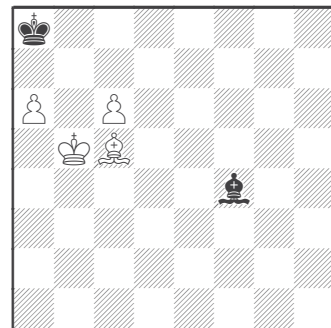
By Junior Tay

**MSRP: \$29.95**

Openings expert Junior Tay examines the Schliemann Defense and its many variations. He provides repertoire options for Black, answers all the key questions and tells you all you need to know about successfully playing the Schliemann.

EVERYMAN CHESS

61.♙c5



Now the white king is ready to go around, and the white bishop will kick the black one out of the last defensive diagonal.

61...♙b8 62.♙c4 ♙c7 63.♙d5 ♙d8  
64.♙e6 ♙c7 65.♙d7 ♙a5 66.♙e7

I have shown you some of the all-time best examples of technique. I hope that this journey has been instructive and entertaining. As I have mentioned before on these pages, I regularly come back to the classics and learn something new each time. I suspect many of the top GMs do the same.

**Black resigned** ■

# George N. Cheney: An American Chess Story

by JOHN S. HILBERT

## Author's Note:

I have long admired George N. Cheney (1837-1861) for his personal modesty and paradoxical, temperamental boldness: the fiery young man from Syracuse, New York, whose play captured the imagination of Paul Morphy's co-editor, Daniel Willard Fiske, whose problem compositions entertained his peers, and whose forward-charging focus led him to an early Virginia grave, his regiment's first offering to forces incomparably less benign than Caissa.

Had he lived, American chess might well have had decades of another spectacular player and composer to enrich its history. But the Civil War took him young, as it did so many noble souls, including that of the brilliant and equally unfortunate James A. Leonard (1841-1862).

Long forgotten except by a few, Cheney deserves a better fate.

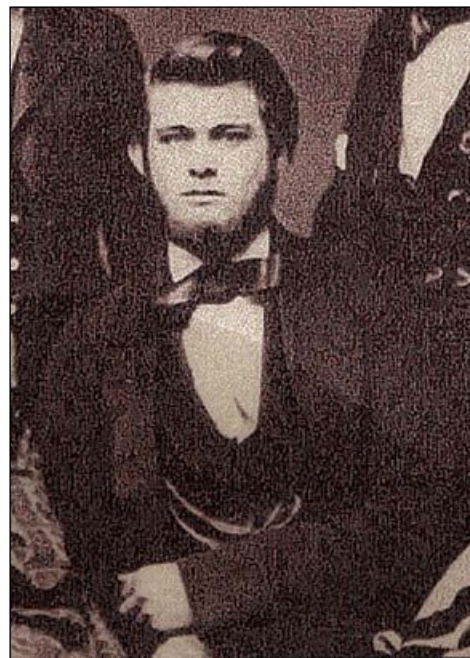
**G**eorge Nelson Cheney was born on April 2, 1837, in Syracuse, New York. He

early exhibited extraordinary mathematical ability. At eighteen, in 1855, he entered New York Central College, in Cortland, and in his first year proved to be one of the school's most adept mathematics students. Great things were expected from such a talented young man.

Cheney's connection with chess began late, in 1854, when he was seventeen. An older brother taught him the game, but isolated as Cheney was in the heartland of New York State, his chance for rapid improvement would have been small, but for one happy meeting. In 1856, Cheney's sister, Nellie, introduced him to Daniel Willard Fiske, the future co-editor, with Paul Morphy, of *The Chess Monthly*. That summer Fiske had been visiting family in Syracuse, and the New York City player took an interest in Nellie's brother, who by then had discovered chess columns and had begun to compose his own chess problems.

Upstate New York was the young Cheney's world. And it was a new world, indeed. By 1850, Syracuse had been incorporated for a mere quarter century. The Erie Canal, the region's major economic project, had opened just twenty years before. The canal radically expanded Western and Central New York's importance as a trade route to the nation's interior. Although not directly on the canal, Syracuse too enjoyed the boom. The city's population mushroomed to over 22,000, a huge increase for the time. Yet by the 1850s the railroads were already undermining the canal's monopoly on cheap movement of raw materials and finished goods.

The Cheneys had long been involved in the area's development. Cheney's father, Lucius Augustus Cheney, was born in Vermont on July 23, 1802. His family brought him to Central New York in 1811. During the War of 1812, the family routinely watched soldiers passing by their home, tramping off to the Niagara frontier. In October 1826, at the age of twenty-four, Lucius married Sarah Bicknell of Morrisville, New York. A contractor and builder by trade, Lucius Cheney had several brothers who also stayed in the area, one of



▲ George N. Cheney



Syracuse, New York,  
in the 1850s.  
Courtesy Library of  
Congress.



whom, Timothy Cheney, had his early recollections of Syracuse gathered together for publication: *Reminiscences of Syracuse*, by Timothy C. Cheney, compiled by Parish B. Johnson (Syracuse 1857). Unfortunately for those interested in Lucius's chess-playing son, the work only recorded events before his birth.

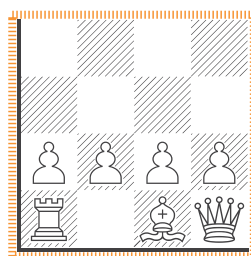
George Cheney was the family's fifth child. Curtis Warner, Lucius and Sarah's first son, was born July 31, 1827, but died in infancy. Augustus Bryon was born August 7, 1829, and Lucian (known as Lucius) Harrison Cheney on October 9, 1831. A sister, Ellen Mersylvia (the "Nellie" who introduced her brother to Daniel Willard Fiske), was born March 29, 1835, and for many years lived in Syracuse, teaching school. Her birth was followed two years later by George Cheney's, on April 2, 1837. The youngest sibling, Edward Alonzo, was born on October 2, 1840.

Cheney developed a relationship with Fiske, who encouraged the young man to visit New York City, so as to face the strongest competition. Cheney visited Manhattan early in 1857, where Fiske introduced him to the New York chess scene. As very few remember

today, Cheney was invited to play at New York 1857, the First American Chess Congress, but was prevented from doing so by illness. His absence may have been for the best, for although he did show great promise at that early date, he was hardly prepared for the likes of Paulsen and Morphy. Living in upstate New York left him perpetually out of practice, and with little opportunity to perfect his game. Two years later, in 1859, Cheney finally faced Paul Morphy, but only at knight odds. Even so, it was remarkable that he won one of their two contests:

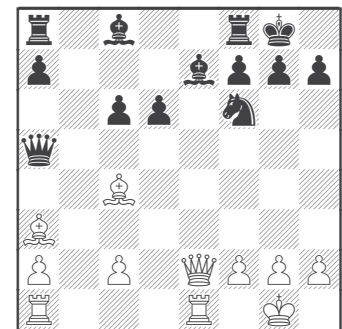
### Paul Morphy – George N. Cheney New York 1859

#### WHITE'S QUEEN'S KNIGHT ODDS



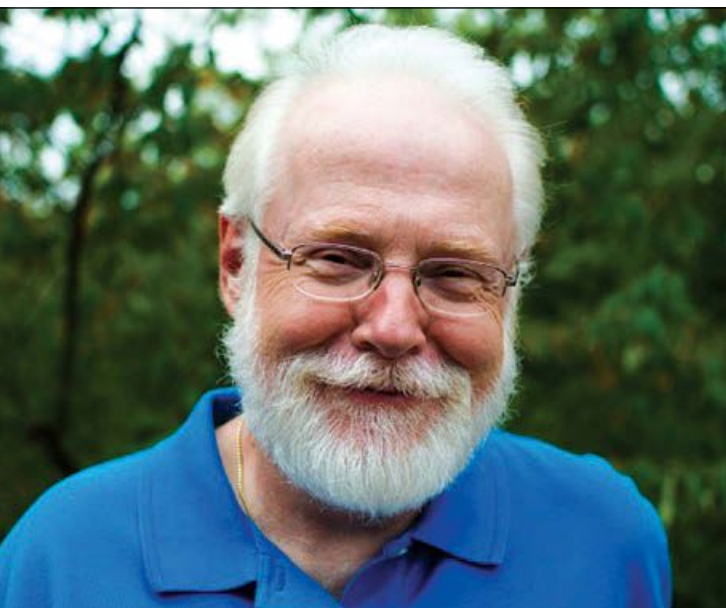
10. ♖a3 ♘c6 11. ♘xd4 0-0 12. ♘xc6  
bxc6 13. ♖e2 ♖a5

1. e4 e5  
2. ♘f3 ♘c6  
3. ♖c4 ♖c5  
4. b4 d5  
5. exd5 ♘xb4  
6. 0-0 ♘f6  
7. d4 exd4  
8. ♖e1+ ♖e7  
9. d6 cxd6



14. ♖b2 Here a famous master of another generation wrote "The orchestration of the Black pieces reveals a rare talent, and in view of the great odds given his opponent it is no wonder that Morphy, faced with the renowned problemist, is unable to make his superiority count."—Géza Maróczy.

14... ♖b8 15. ♖ab1 ♖d8 16. ♖c3 ♖xc3  
17. ♖xb8 ♖a5 18. ♖eb1 ♖b6 19. a4  
♖e8 20. ♖d3 ♖xd3 21. ♖xd3 ♖d7  
22. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23. ♖a1 g6 24. a5  
♖c5 25. h3 ♘d5 26. ♖b1 ♘b4 27. ♖e4  
f5 28. c3 fxe4 29. cxb4 ♖d4 30. ♖d1  
♖e5 31. ♖e1 d5 32. f3 ♖d4+ 33. ♖f1  
e3 34. ♖c1 a6 35. ♖e2 ♖f7 36. f4 ♖e6  
37. ♖d3 ♖a7 38. g4 d4 39. ♖e4 ♖d6  
40. f5 gxf5+ 41. gxf5 c5 42. bxc5+  
♖xc5 43. f6 ♖g6+ 44. ♖f4 d3 45. ♖xc5  
♖xc5 46. ♖xe3 ♖c4 0-1



John S. Hilbert is the author of over a dozen books and many articles on chess history and chess biography. He has won three Fred Cramer Awards for Best Chess Book in the United States (1998: Napier; 2002: Essays in American Chess History; 2003: Young Marshall) and the First ChessCafe Book of the Year Award (2000: Shady Side: The Life and Crimes of Norman Tweed Whitaker, Chessmaster). His most recent work, co-authored with Olimpiu G. Urcan, is W.H.K. Pollock: A Chess Biography with 524 Games (McFarland 2017).

Over time Cheney turned to problem composition, finding in that solitary pursuit a joyful, artistic expression. Many of Cheney's efforts, both games and problems, first appeared in the chess column of the *Syracuse Daily Standard*. The column was originally edited by William Orville Fiske, Daniel Willard Fiske's brother. Quite possibly Morphy's co-editor introduced his brother William to Cheney. Before long Cheney himself edited the column, which appeared regularly in the *Standard* for just over two years, from late August 1857 until early September 1859.

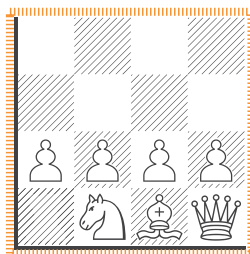
Typical for the times, the identity of many of the players appearing in the *Standard*'s games were at least partially disguised. While some of the young "Mr. C's" games appeared in the *Standard*, this shouldn't be construed as unrestrained expression of Cheney's editorial vanity. Local readers wanted local games, and no one was more talented at chess in Central New York than Cheney himself. Many of his published games in the *Standard* ended with announced mates, which made perfect tactical mating problems for the column's readership, thus serving a pedagogical purpose as well as offering entertainment.

Cheney often went to great lengths in offering handicaps to local players. In the following game (originally

identified as played by "G.N.C.") Cheney not only plays without sight of the board, but without his a1 rook:

**George N. Cheney – O. Williams**  
Syracuse 1859

**OFFHAND, WHITE BLINDFOLDED,  
WHITE'S QUEEN'S ROOK ODDS**



1.e4 e5  
2.♙c4 ♘f6  
3.♘f3 ♙c5  
4.♘xe5  
0-0 5.d4  
♙b6  
6.♘c3  
d6 7.♘f3  
♙e8 8.0-0

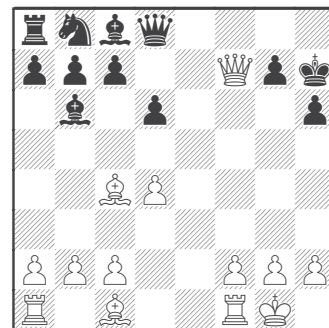
♘xe4 It was wiser to refrain from this apparently risk free pawn grab.

After 8...♙g4! 9.♙d3 ♘c6 Black has safer play.

9.♘xe4 ♙xe4 10.♘g5 ♙e7 10...♙e6 was most precise, since White's attack leads to nothing: 11.♙xe6 (11.♘xe4 ♙xc4) 11...♙xe6 12.♙h5 ♙e8 13.♙xh7+ ♔f8 14.♙h8+ ♔e7 15.♙h4 ♔d7, etc.

11.♙h5 h6 Engine analysis suggests Black already needed to find the following variation: 11...♙f5 12.♘xf7 ♙f8 13.♘h6+ ♔h8 14.♘xf5 (14.♘f7+? loses to 14...♙xf7 15.♙xf7 g6, etc.) 14...g6 15.♙h4 gxf5 16.♙h6 ♙g7 17.♙xg7+ ♔xg7 18.♙fe1 ♘c6 19.♙e6 ♔h8 20.♙h6 ♙e7 21.♙xh7+ ♙xh7 22.♙f6+ ♙g7 23.♙h4+ with a draw by perpetual check the most logical outcome. Quite a task for a rook odds player, and too much for Mr. Williams, to future readers' delight.

12.♘xf7 ♙xf7 13.♙xf7+ ♔h7



And now comes the highlight of the miniature: deflecting Black's Queen from the back row.

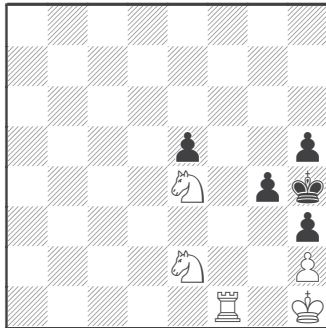
14.♙g5 White also wins with 14.♙d3+ or 14.♙e1, but Cheney found the sparkler blindfolded. We'll never know what alternatives he considered when evaluating this position, although he might have been tempted by 14.♙xh6. But after a few "only" moves, and a trick or two, Black avoids the worst: 14...♔xh6 15.♙d3 ♙f6 16.♙e8 ♙f5 17.♙h8+ ♔g5 (17...♔g6 18.g4 threatening mate with ♙h5) 18...♔f7 19.♙xf5 g6 20.♙h7+ ♙g7 21.♙xg6+ ♔f8 etc.) 18.f4+ ♔g6 19.♙e8+ ♔h6 (19...♔h7 20.♙h5+) 20.g4 ♙xd4+ when it's White's turn to find only moves.

14...♖xg5 After which Cheney won with the far more prosaic:

15.♔d3+ ♕f5 16.♔xf5+ ♖xf5  
17.♖xf5+ ♔g8 18.♖c8+ ♔h7  
19.♖xb7 **1-0**

*Syracuse Daily Standard, July 9, 1859*

Chess problems soon captured Cheney's interest. He had a particular fascination with knights, it seems, and several of his compositions suggest his interest in how the knights could be used in combination to create striking and bold solutions. The following two problems appeared in 1859: (solutions at end of article)

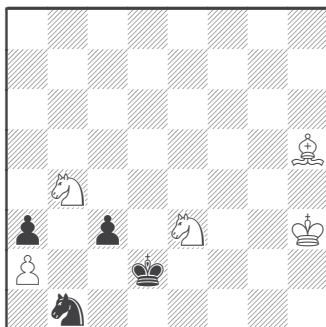


### 1. Mate in Three

George N. Cheney

*Syracuse Daily Standard, July 2, 1859*

And another problem where the knights wreck havoc:



### 2. Mate in Four

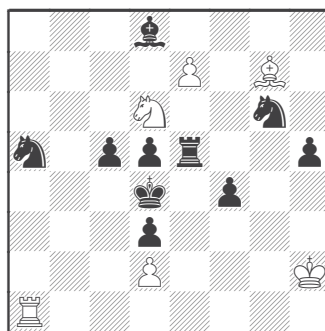
George N. Cheney

*Syracuse Daily Standard, March 24, 1859*

Two other Cheney problems, both likely conceived and created later than those appearing in the *Syracuse Daily*

*Standard*, can be seen in *Encyclopedia of Chess Problems*, by Milan Velimirović and Kari Valtonen (Chess Informant 2012), Problems 318 and 1430. Another dozen or more can be found in *American Chess Nuts*, edited by E.B. Cook, W.R. Henry, and C.A. Gilberg (New York 1868), a volume available electronically through various internet sources.

Curiously, especially given his propensity for interesting use of knights in his problems, Cheney missed what might have been a fine example of knight use in one of his compositions. He published a problem involving underpromotion to a bishop, the solution demanding a mate in four. Computer evaluation shows Black can hold out for five moves, thus cooking the problem. However, with underpromotion to a knight, the problem transforms into a valid mate in three! Although flawed, as it was intended, the problem succeeds quite well, thanks to *Komodo 8*. Of course, one can only wonder how Cheney would have marveled at our current technology, and its uses:



### 3. Mate in Four (Originally); Now Mate in Three

George N. Cheney

*Syracuse Daily Standard, July 22, 1859*

Details now are known tracing Cheney's untimely death during the Civil War, including a correction in his date of death.

Cheney responded immediately to Lincoln's call for volunteers following the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861. He enlisted as a three

month volunteer on April 23 in the Onondaga Regiment, soon to be renamed the 12<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry, in Company A. Whether motivated by a desire to defend his country, or a deeper, more personal desire to eradicate slavery, is unknown-although the college he attended, New York Central College, was founded by anti-slavery Baptists in 1849. Unlike most schools of the day, New York Central was integrated. Perhaps both factors, patriotism and religiously inspired demand for equal rights, fueled his quick and resolute nature, motivating Cheney's final, fatal choice.

Six of the ten companies in the 12<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry were raised in Syracuse. On Thursday, May 2, 1861, at 1:00 p.m., cheered by a crowd of family and friends, and escorted by the Syracuse Fire Department, they marched, over 800 strong, to board sixteen railroad cars for the seventy mile journey to Elmira, New York. There the men elected officers, a common practice for volunteer troops early in the Civil War. Morris H. Church, who had raised Cheney's Company A, was elected captain.

At Elmira, where the men stayed several weeks organizing, Cheney had his first opportunity to write home. Recently recovered is a letter Cheney wrote to his aunt, originally published in the *Syracuse Carrier* for May 11, 1861, that described his early experience with his unit. It shows us something of the twenty-four-year-old's mind away from chess:

### Notes from a Volunteer's Knapsack, by George N. Cheney

Barracks, 12<sup>th</sup> Reg. N.Y. V.,  
Elmira, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1861

"Dear Aunt:-This is a queer, nondescript sort of life we are leading here, and though I have waited to tell you how I liked it, I cannot do it. It is outlandish, and there is nothing to like about it. At the same time, my health



is so good I cannot dislike it. I am very glad I came so far.”

“We arrived about two o’clock Friday morning, chilled through and turned into our bunks. These are about seven feet long by five wide: two on a frame, one above the other. There are two narrow straw ticks in each bunk; one light blanket to each tick; two men sleep in the bunk; four in the frame. There are six rows of these frames in this room; twelve in each row, making nearly three hundred men who sleep in this big room or story. There are three such stories in this building, which used to be a store house; the whole regiment is in it. We have got used to our sleeping arrangements now, so that we get along pretty comfortably, though most of the boys have colds. But the first night was a tough one. It was enough to make a horse laugh to hear the boys go on about their beds. ‘Don’t get any feathers into your ear’ ‘Get out of bed with your boots on; you’ll muddy the sheets.’ ‘Here, waiter, waiter, bring me a pillow,’ back and forth, a perfect hubbub. We got up early in the morning, washed in the canal, and wiped on our handkerchiefs-(no towels, you know). We hadn’t slept much, but we laughed everything off, and after breakfast we felt better.”

“Repeated calls are made during the meal for ‘oyster soup,’ ‘chicken pie,’ ‘Some griddle cakes,’ ‘Pass the butter this way,’ etc., etc., but no such things were to be had. Bread, beef roast or boiled, boiled potatoes are the only food, except at noon, when beans sometimes takes the place of potatoes. Coffee takes the place of all other luxuries. I drink two quarts a day and could not get along without it. I believe some men drink a gallon a day. Our meals are set on long tables; each man helps himself to what he wants. We are waited on, the table set and cleared off, and the dishes washed by men of the company, four different ones being detailed each day for this duty. Each company eats by itself. The contractors



▲ Colonel, later Brig. Gen., Israel B. (“Fighting Dick”) Richardson, Commander of Cheney’s Brigade in the Army of Northeastern Virginia. Courtesy Library of Congress

get \$2.94 a week for each man. They could afford to feed us better than they do for this sum.”

“Our life is as follows: The reveille beats at half-past five o’clock to get up; six, roll call; seven, breakfast; nine, drill till twelve; twelve, dinner. It is now almost one, and I am writing this letter. From two till four, drill; five o’clock, supper; nine-thirty, roll call; ten o’clock, taps sounded, lights shut off; silence enforced. We are supposed to go to sleep.”

“We have not yet settled down to rigid discipline, but it grows more strict every day. Sentinels are posted everywhere around the barracks. No one can go down town without leave. We expect our uniforms every day. There are about

three thousand volunteers in town, more arriving by every train. They are quartered in all sorts of places; some in churches, some in halls, one company in the Court House. None of their quarters seem to be as good as ours.”

“In haste, yours, George N. Cheney.”

The letter also appeared years later in *Onondaga’s Part in the Civil War*, by Sarah Sumner Teall (An Annual Volume of the Onondaga Historical Association) (The Dehler Press: Syracuse 1915), pp.25-27.

Cheney wrote his aunt from Elmira’s Clinton Street Barracks. Spirits at the time were high, although even then the men, many of them from rural farm areas, were starting to suffer from diseases caused by close proximity and poor hygiene. The early emphasis on drill, the initial imposition of military routine not yet settled and accepted, the dislike for the repetitive, meager fare, are all seen in Cheney’s letter. Over the next four years, the same experiences would be lived, and written about, by tens of thousands of young men, both north and south, many of them leaving their families never to return.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment was mustered in at Elmira (May 13<sup>th</sup>) issued tents (May 18<sup>th</sup>) and issued a somewhat insufficient number of firearms (720 in all), specifically United States percussion muskets, model of 1842. (Later they received the more standard Enfield rifles.) In this time of emergency, much delay and extra work was caused by lack of supplies and poor preparation. Yet not all was toil. An area farmer, William T. Post, invited the entire regiment to his farm and entertained them with “beer, gingerbread, crackers and bushels of apples.” The men were quite grateful. For some of them, for perhaps many of them, this was their first long travel away from home, and their first view of the wider world.

The men’s uniforms were, sadly enough, as hurriedly prepared and prone to failure as much of their equipment. There was no standard pattern for

outfitting volunteer troops. Although today we remember “the Blue and the Gray” as sharply delineating the Union and Confederate forces, the colors hadn’t defined the troops at the start of the war. In fact, Cheney and his Union regiment at Elmira were initially issued gray pants and jackets. Other troops were soon to learn such outfits led to dangerous and deadly mistakes on the battlefield. Despite being anxious to obtain their uniforms, many men in Cheney’s regiment were quite disappointed when the misfit clothing finally arrived. They also suffered wearing “coarse army shoes.”

On May 26, orders arrived for the regiment’s transfer to Washington, DC. Soon the men found themselves back on the railroad, taking a long, overnight ride via Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, down to Baltimore, and finally to Washington, arriving there late on May 30. Sympathies turned as the troops traveled south. In Syracuse and Elmira the men had been sent off by cheering crowds. In Baltimore, where his regiment had to change trains, they faced open hostility. As another man in Cheney’s regiment later wrote, the men were “surrounded by a crowd of ugly, cross looking rebels, who wanted to annihilate us, and we expected a riot; but as we had received our guns and ammunition before we left Elmira, they let us alone.” Correspondents who saw the troops march through Baltimore, and then attended their arrival in Washington, commented on how large and muscular the Western New York boys looked.

At Washington Cheney’s regiment marched to the White House and then to General Winfield Scott’s residence, where the men paid their respects to Lincoln and the old Union commander. The men soon took up camp on East Capitol Hill, renaming it Camp Onondaga. It was here that Lincoln came to thank the men for answering his call, seeing a review and shaking hands all around afterward. There for several weeks the men learned more of the rudiments of army life, including



▲ Chain Bridge over the Potomac; Cheney crossed it into Virginia on July 15, 1861.  
*Courtesy Library of Congress*

finding their regiment incorporated into the Union’s growing army. The 12<sup>th</sup> New York was assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, led by Colonel Israel B. Richardson, which was itself assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Division of the Army of Northeastern Virginia. Brigadier General Irvin McDowell had been assigned to command the army only on May 28, the day before Cheney’s regiment left Elmira for Washington.

At Camp Onondaga, the men lived in tents and spent much of their time at drill. Clothing and food, at least in quantity, improved once the Federal government took charge of the New York volunteers. And they were well aware of how they were being treated. Another man in Cheney’s Company A wrote home that “I can’t say I think we have been abused quite as bad as some would like to make out. I have been used first rate by my officers and have

not been hungry. We got a new pair of blue pants the other day, and knapsacks, and a nice white blanket, – not like the poor N.Y. State blankets we got at Elmira. Without any joking I think that New York State has not done all that she might for us, but we are now under the United States, and fare better as far as clothing goes.” Even Cheney’s regimental commander wrote home that the troops had been issued fine uniforms, with “dark blue blouses and trousers, Kossuth hat, equipments, etc.”

Some soldiers wrote home, while others visited the new Smithsonian Institute, then still a new institution in the city. Cheney didn’t permit his new army life to divorce him from chess. According to *A Sketchbook of American Chess Problemists*, a number of Cheney’s last problems “were figured out by him while waiting for the bugle to blow, in camp and on the fields which were so soon to become the fields of battle.” The men celebrated the Fourth of July by firing off their guns. Then, on July 15, 1861, the 12<sup>th</sup> New York was ordered over the Potomac River by way of the “Chain Bridge,” and into Virginia for the first time. The bridge by now

Blackburn's Ford, Virginia, site of George N. Cheney's Death, July 18, 1861 (Photograph taken July 1862, when Union forces occupied the area). *Photographic History of the Civil War, Vol. 1, Edited by Francis Trevelyan Miller (New York 1911), p.151*



was in fact a truss structure but retained the earlier bridge's historic name. Here Cheney made his entry into Virginia.

After crossing the Chain Bridge, the regiment continued on a few miles to Fairfax, Virginia, where they expected to meet Confederate resistance. The rebels had in fact pulled back, taking up positions along the far bank of the Bull Run River, a tributary of the Potomac. After camping at Fairfax, Cheney's regiment marched two more miles the next morning, to Blackburn's Ford, a crossing for Bull Run River. On that day, July 18, 1861, Cheney and his regiment fought at Blackburn's Ford. For Cheney, it was his first and last fight.

Chess references, including Jeremy Gaige's *Chess Personalia*, have identified Cheney as dying on July 21, 1861, at the battle of First Bull Run (or First Manassas, as it is also known). In fact he died three days earlier, on July 18, at Blackburn's Ford. The later confusion about the date of his death is understandable, as even the earliest announcement to the chess community of the young man's fate, appearing months after the fact, mistimed the sad event. On November 23, 1861, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* reported Cheney's end under the headline "Death of a Patriot Chess Player," in the following words:

We are called upon to chronicle the death of Mr. George Nelson Cheney, the well-known Chess player, Chess editor and problem composer of Syracuse. In response to the President's call for three months volunteers, he enlisted in the Onondaga regiment, and was killed in the disastrous battle at Bull Run. His officers speak of him in the highest terms. He was one of a very small number selected from his regiment to do skirmishing duty in that unfortunate engagement. He was last seen considerably in advance of his party, for, as skirmishers, they were fighting every man for himself. A companion observed that he was loading without being sufficiently protected, and called out to him: "For God's sake, Cheney, get behind a tree; you'll get shot! His only reply was, "Well!" He was soon lost sight of in the smoke of the battle, and has never been seen since.

Even as *Frank Leslie's* reported Cheney's death, it announced that demand for space for war news forced the chess column's discontinuation. Many chess sources ended as the conflict began, including Fiske's stately *The Chess Monthly* and his far more Bohemian offerings in the *New York Saturday Press*. Had Fiske been involved in chess in the latter half of 1861, it is hard to imagine he wouldn't

have sincerely, and more accurately, honored his friend Cheney's memory. Later chess writings about Cheney's death, such as in the March 1872 issue of the *Dubuque Chess Journal*, merely echoed the initial reports that he died "in the disastrous battle at Bull Run." As time passed, and as memories faded, Cheney's death was simply assumed to have taken place on the date of the battle itself, July 21, 1861.

The record now confirms George N. Cheney died three days earlier, on July 18, 1861, at the small engagement known as Blackburn's Ford, as the armies maneuvered toward what eventually culminated in First Bull Run. Cheney's regiment "was the first to be under fire at Blackburn's Ford on the 18th, preliminary to the first Bull Run engagement. Lieut. Randall of this regiment, having command of about twenty of our men as skirmishers, was the first to attack the enemy. George N. Cheney, a private of Company A, was the first man killed." *History of Onondaga County, New York*, by W.W. Clayton (Syracuse, NY, 1878), p.92. Cheney's regiment suffered no casualties at the July 21, 1861 battle of Bull Run. It was held in reserve after its hard fighting a few days earlier at Blackburn's Ford. (*New York in the War of the Rebellion*, 3<sup>rd</sup>





ed. Frederick Phisterer (Albany, NY, 1912), p.576.

As reported by Webster Ransom, another of the young men in Cheney's regiment, following an early breakfast that day the men "were marched about two miles and had an engagement at Blackburn's Ford. I am one of the lucky ones who escaped unhurt, but I am sorry to say we had to retreat and lose the battle. We were the first regiment engaged in this fight." The engagement at Blackburn's Ford was short, but severe. "The regiment was moved to the left to ascertain the position of the enemy, and suddenly encountered a heavy fire from a masked battery. After two or three attempts to charge this battery it fell back to a ravine," after which artillery was brought up. The regiment lost 8 killed (some accounts say 7), 17 wounded, and 5 missing, "and shed the first blood of the [future] Army of the Potomac."

As first man killed at Blackburn's Ford, Cheney became the first fatality of the future Army of the Potomac. His loss profoundly affected his family. When one of Cheney's brothers had a son born the next spring, on April 26, 1862, he named him George N. Cheney in honor of the fallen chess player. Cheney's nephew grew up to inherit his uncle's chess library, and himself played chess the remainder of his long life, only dying in 1951. No doubt the elder George Cheney would have been proud.

## A NOTE ON SOURCES

The Morphy game and Maroczy's comment are taken from *Paul Morphy*, by Géza Maróczy (translated from the German by Robert Sherwood) (Caissa Editions 2012), p.224. Comments regarding Cheney — Williams are by the author with the assistance of Olimpiu Urcan. Other sources for games and problems are identified in the text.

Information regarding Cheney's family appears in *The Cheney Genealogy*, by Charles Henry Pope (Boston 1897), p.381, as well as in *Past and Present of Syracuse and Onondaga County, New York: From Prehistoric Times to the Beginning of 1908, Vol. 2*, by William M. Beauchamp (S.J. Clarke: New York 1908) p.861. This latter source mentions that the family included George Nelson Cheney, "a famous chess player, who was killed in the battle of Bull Run in 1861." As with all summary sources, Cheney's death is mistakenly attributed to the date of First Bull Run, July 21, 1861, when in fact he died three days earlier. This fact has been highlighted in a recent, general audience treatment of Cheney's life: "Checkmate: A Chess Master's Life is Cut Short at Blackburn's Ford," by Susan D. Harris, *America's Civil War*,

July 2016, pp.36-39 (see also p.22). Other sources are listed in the text.

My first attempt at providing something of Cheney's life was written over ten years ago, in an article for *The Chess Journalist*, published in the December 2008 issue, pp.3-6 (reprinted with some revisions in *Writings in Chess History* (Moravian Chess: Olomouc 2012), pp.70-77; information and sources on Cheney's nephew, the younger George N. Cheney, appears in this second source). The present article offers far greater detail than either previous version. Chess history is always a work in progress. When I first researched Cheney, the only available chess columns were painstakingly obtained from the Cleveland Public Library's John G. White Collection, printed, at ten cents a page, off the microform center's temperamental machines. More recently, thanks to Nick Pope's extraordinary Chess Archaeology website, and more specifically his Jack O'Keefe Project, under the site's "Excavations" section (<http://www.chessarch.com/excavations/excavations.php>), many more crucial columns are available.

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## SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS:

**01** 1.♖f4 exf4 2.♘2g3 f3 2...fxg3 3.hxg3 mate. 3.♘f5 mate.

*Syracuse Daily Standard*, July 2, 1859

**02** 1.♘c4+ ♔c1 1...♔e1 2.♖g2 ♘d2 (2...c2 3.♘xc2 mate) 3.♘c2 mate. 2.♘d3+ ♔c2 3.♔e2 ♘d2 4.♘xa3 mate.

*Syracuse Daily Standard*, March 24, 1859

**03** Cheney's published solution ran as follows. The quoted parentheticals are Cheney's words that appeared in place of actual moves in the solution. There are, of course, multiple lines, but

this represents his primary one: 1.exd8♙ ♔f3 ("pawn moves") 2.♖a4+ ♘c4 ("knight covers") 3.♔a5 f2 ("anything") 4.♔c3 mate. *Syracuse Daily Standard*, July 22, 1859 (solution July 28, 1859).

However, a chess engine, working with 1.exd8♙, found a line that delayed

mate by another move: 1...♘b3 2.♖a4+ c4 3.♔b6+ ♘c5 4.♖a5 with mate only occurring on the next, fifth move. The "solution" is to change the problem to a mate in three, starting with underpromotion to Cheney's favorite, the knight: 1.exd8♘ ♘f8 2.♖xa5 f3 3.♘c6 mate.



# FRESH LEAVES 7 from the BOOKSHELF

by **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

**Carsten Hansen** is a FIDE Master and chess enthusiast residing in Bayonne, New Jersey. He has written twelve books, mostly on openings, the most recent *The Sicilian Dragon – move by move* (Everyman Chess 2016). From 2000 to 2014, he wrote the book review column, Checkpoint at [chesscafe.com](http://chesscafe.com). You can find his blog on all areas of chess at [carstenchess.com](http://carstenchess.com).

## 10 NOTEWORTHY BOOKS



01

**Let Me Ask You, Do You Know...?**by Nikola Karakljajic (*Chess Informant* 2018)

02

**Sabotaging The Sicilian, French and Caro-Kann with 2.b3**by Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski (*Russell Enterprises* 2018)

03

**Crucial Skills for the Club Players – Volume 1**by Robert Ris (*Thinkers Publishing* 2018)

04

**Strategic Chess Exercises**by Emmanuel Bricard (*New In Chess* 2018)

05

**The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein**by Genna Sosonko (*Elk and Ruby* 2017)

06

**How to Beat the Open Games**by Sverre Johnsen (*Gambit Publications* 2018)

07

**Fundamental Chess Tactics**by Antonio Gude (*Gambit Publications* 2017)

08

**A lifetime repertoire: Play the Nimzo-Indian**by R. Kasimdzhanov (*ChessBase GmbH* 2018)

09

**The Elshad System**by Igor Nemtsev (*Mongoose Press* 2017)

10

**First Steps: Caro-Kann Defence**by Andrew Martin (*Everyman Chess* 2018)

# This

time around, I have an exciting batch of new books, which should appeal to the happy amateur who wants to be entertained or learn some basic chess ideas, but also to more ambitious players who want to improve their understanding and skill in different departments of the game.

## 01 Let Me Ask You, Do You Know...?

by Nikola Karaklajic

MSRP \$ 28.95



You may not have heard about the author, but he was an international master who won the Yugoslav Championship in 1955, at a time when his national

team was ranked second or third in the world. Nikola Karaklajic was the first notable exponent and indeed probably the inventor of the Belgrade Gambit (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘d5) and was also the arbiter for the 1992 match between Fischer and Spassky in Belgrade. He died in 2008 at the age of 82. The present book is a chess classic in the author's native language of Serbo-Croat and despite its ambiguous title it's solely about the endgame.

It is broken up into 52 lessons, ideally representing one lesson per week. Each lesson has a theme, for example "Pawn Endgames: 3 Pawns versus 3 Pawns". The lessons open with some introductory examples, based on positions either from actual play or endgame studies. Along with the commentary these examples set the tone for the chapter, what it's all about and what to keep in mind when eventually heading for the six test positions which support each lesson. Finally, annotated solutions to the tests are given.

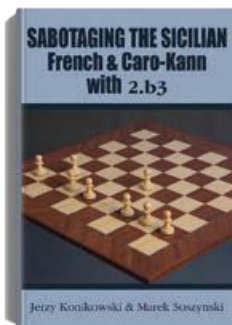
Not all of the lessons have the same degree of difficulty, some are far easier than others, but generally speaking the easiest ones will still be challenging for players rated below 1500, while the most difficult ones could prove a stern test even for players rated well above 2200.

This book offers very instructive study material which will greatly benefit aspiring players, provided they take it easy and patiently work through just one lesson per week. For the chess coach too, it provides an ideal tool to work with when instructing serious and ambitious students. I didn't know what to expect from this book when I first received it but, quite frankly, I now love it and I know I will be using it both for myself and my students. Highly recommended.

## 02 Sabotaging The Sicilian, French and Caro-Kann with 2.b3

by Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski

MSRP \$ 19.95



Russell Enterprises have published a wide variety of books over the years, including those covering historic events such as Najdorf's book on the 1953 Candidates

and Euwe's book on the 1948 World Championship tournament, 21<sup>st</sup> century editions of classic books written by Lasker, Reti, and others, biographies by the Linder brothers, Dvoretsky's most recent works and finally monographs on so-called non-mainstream openings such as my book on the Chameleon Sicilian (1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 followed by 3.♗ge2), Scandinavian with 3...♗d6 and 3...♗d8 respectively, Four Pawns Attack in the King's Indian, Morra Gambit, Danish Gambit and even 1.b4, a book again co-authored by Konikowski.

In the present book, the authors cover 2.b3 against the Sicilian, French and Caro-Kann, a three-in-one

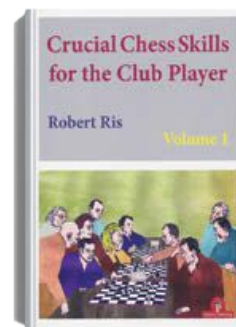
repertoire. The material is presented in 21 chapters and incorporated into 30 main games. While these offbeat lines of play do occasionally get wheeled out in top level chess, they are better suited for rapid, blitz or sub-2000 rated players. This, of course, doesn't prevent them from being pretty ferocious weapons, particularly in the hands of a player conducting the white pieces who knows what he or she is doing against someone playing Black who is not similarly prepared – and you won't be unless you have studied this book!

This interesting work contains material on an opening system with a difference which is barely covered in other opening manuals. It's a lot of fun and I hope it reaches a wide audience.

## 03 Crucial Skills for the Club Players - Volume 1

by Robert Ris

MSRP \$ 34.95



Primarily known for his popular ChessBase DVDs, Dutch International Master Robert Ris has now set his sights on writing books designed to help club

players improve their standard of play. There are three main themes: Endgames (chapters 1-4), Tactical Play (chapters 5-6), and Middlegame Strategy (chapters 7-9).

Unlike the next book I review, the material here is perfectly suited for players rated below 1900, and also for self-study. The illustrative games were mostly played over the last 6-7 years and include several from 2017, although there are some classics too. All these games have been selected for their instructional value and are thoroughly



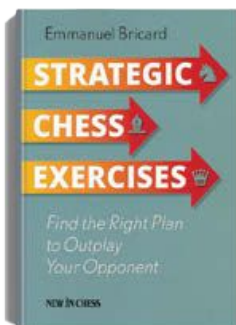
annotated, mostly with explanatory prose but supported by analysis and variations whenever needed. I particularly liked the first part but, in fairness, every single chapter fulfils the pledge made by the title of the book.

Each topic is covered in detail and in a highly educational fashion. A careful and patient study of this book will surely be rewarded by a substantial improvement in the reader's playing standard. I can't wait to see the next volume and what else Ris will be showing us. Again, highly recommended.

## 04 Strategic Chess Exercises

by Emmanuel Bricard

MSRP \$ 24.95



On the back cover of this book by French Grandmaster Bricard, we are being told that “this book is for you if you want to:

- Improve your understanding of chess strategy

- Know what to do if there is no tactical solution
- Learn how to apply strategic principles in concrete positions
- Learn how to accumulate advantages in various types of positions.”

*Strategic Chess Exercises* is divided into two parts: middlegame exercises and endgame exercises. These are not the usual type of tactical exercises but those that fit into the parameters given above. In each part there are 40 exercises, all accompanied with a little text such as “What plan leads to a large advantage for Black?” or “What do you think of this position and how would you evaluate it?”. These exercises are not easy, in fact, far from it, but I found them to be very challenging and motivating.

The selected positions are not those that have already been seen previously in countless books and magazines. Even if the names of the players are familiar,

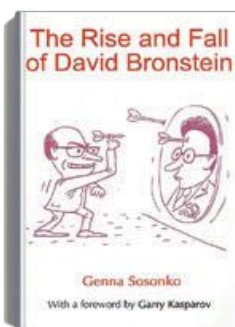
the games and therefore the exercises are fresh, even if some had been played 20-30-40 or even 80 years ago. Care has been taken over the solutions, both in terms of giving concrete lines of play and verbal explanations, to ensure the student grasps the concepts the author wants to get across.

For those serious students wishing to gain maximum benefit from this book, I would suggest they have a minimum rating of 2000, although the material will also be useful for players rated as high as 2400. For chess coaches, this book is nothing short of phenomenal.

## 05 The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein

by Genna Sosonko

MSRP \$ 27.99



Grandmaster Genna Sosonko is known both as the former Editor-in-chief of the *New In Chess* Yearbooks and also as the author of interesting biographical

works such as *The World Champions I Knew*, *Russian Silhouettes*, *Smart Chip from St. Petersburg* and other tales from a bygone chess era as well as shorter dedicated articles in *New In Chess Magazine*. *The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein* is his first collaboration with the new chess publisher Elk and Ruby which specializes in books translated from Russian. In fact the present book was first published in Russia in 2014.

As with anything authored by Sosonko, this book is very well-written with a flair for interesting biographical narrative as well as references to both chess and other literature, which makes it an absolute joy to read – indeed from that standpoint alone it is worth the price even if it does seem a little high for a paperback. Grandmaster and World Championship Challenger David Bronstein is widely heralded as a player who should have been World Champion

but stumbled on the verge of his coronation ceremony by losing a drawn ending in the 23<sup>rd</sup> and penultimate game of his 1951 world title match against Botvinnik, when leading by a full point. That game and the result of the match, which ended in a 12-12 draw, came to haunt Bronstein for the rest of his life – in fact to an extent I had not realized before reading the pages of this fascinating book.

In many ways, before, during and after the match, he greatly exceeded the norm of what was supposedly achievable for someone with his background. The way Sosonko describes him, both from his own personal encounters and also from the recollections of others who dealt with him, Bronstein came across as brilliant but also enigmatic and eccentric, frequently overwhelming people with his imaginative and unusual ideas. He was a harsh critic of other people's opinions of him, even when these were meant to be complimentary in nature, if the sentiment was not expressed with the self-same words he himself would have chosen! For this reason it was difficult to get along with him and Sosonko gives a number of specific incidents by way of illustration. It is no exaggeration to say that Bronstein could sometimes push even benefactors and well-wishers to the brink of desperation!

The tone in the book is bitter-sweet but is probably the most accurate rendition yet of the real-life Bronstein. I now know so many things about his life that I did not know before but which seem to have been common knowledge to those associated with him over the years.

Although there are no games in the book, these are readily available in other publications such as the relatively recent *Bronstein – move by move* by Steve Giddins. However there are many photographs throughout its pages. All in all, a highly recommended read about one of the most fascinating and complex characters in the history of chess.

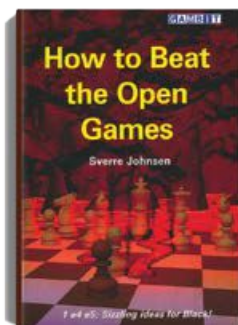
The next book by Genna Sosonko, also published by Elk and Ruby will be *Evil-Doer: Half a Century with Viktor Korchnoi* which is being

published as I'm writing these lines, I'm eagerly looking forward to reading that one as well.

## 06 How to Beat the Open Games

by Sverre Johnsen

MSRP \$ 24.95



Norwegian Sverre Johnsen already has several popular opening books to his credit, such as *Win with the London System* and *Win with the Stonewall Dutch*. In

the present work Johnsen presents a full repertoire for Black in the Open Games – which is defined as 1.e4 e5. However, I cannot accept his excuse for not including any coverage of the Ruy Lopez, on the grounds that it isn't that important in today's opening landscape. However, I understand it may make it into the next edition...

That being said, what has made it into the book has been intelligently selected, thoroughly analyzed and deliciously presented. The material has been divided into 24 chapters, each starting with an inspirational game, frequently a miniature, where White gets smashed to pieces, thereby nicely setting the tone for the rest of the chapter. The book presents the present state of theory, drawing from many sources, such as the works of Bologan and Ntirlis on 1.e4 e5, and then adding a solid amount of analysis and explanatory prose. There's enough of both to provide a concise repertoire against all options for White (except the Ruy Lopez, of course) and not so much that it drowns the reader in heavy duty analysis. Not all authors manage their material with such care to achieve this delicate balance.

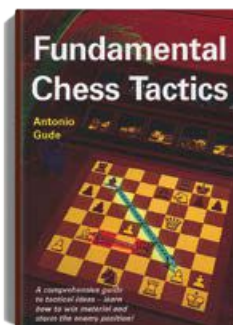
*How to Beat the Open Games* will provide excellent service as a repertoire book for anyone rated up to around

2200 and also as a foundation stone for even further research for players rated well above that.

## 07 Fundamental Chess Tactics

by Antonio Gude

MSRP \$ 28.95



In the past, Gambit Publications have provided us with the widely acclaimed *Fundamental Chess Endings* by Karsten Mueller and Frank

Lamprecht (2001), *Fundamental Chess Openings* by Paul van der Sterren (2009), and *Fundamental Checkmates* also by Antonio Gude (2016), and now the time has come for a weighty treatise on chess tactics. Gude, a chess teacher and writer from Spain, has also authored *A Complete Chess Course* (2015) as well as quite a few titles in Spanish.

This book has eight chapters, the first of which provides a glossary of tactical and strategic terms to help the reader understand what follows. I think this is an excellent prelude as too many tactical books make the assumption that the reader already has all this prior knowledge. Then the next four chapters provide detailed coverage and explanations of individual tactical themes, followed by one further chapter which discusses combined tactical operations. Finally, the last two chapters consist of "Opening Disasters" and "Tactical Examination" to test the reader in everything that has been taught and illustrated throughout the book.

Without going into too much detail, I feel this is easily the finest instructional manual on tactical chess I have ever read. It is comprehensive, yet carefully explains everything in an easy-to-understand fashion for its intended

audience. The only weak spot is the "Opening Disasters" chapter which I feel is rather out of place in this book, but the rest is first class.

## 08 A lifetime repertoire: Play the Nimzo-Indian

by Rustam Kasimdzhanov

MSRP \$ 30.00



No matter how you feel about instruction by electronic means it's clear that it is here to stay, and it seems to be more popular than ever, judging by the staggering

amount and variety of chess DVDs and other video-recorded material that is appearing month after month.

However, as with books, some DVDs are better than others, which is certainly the case with the present work on the Nimzo-Indian: 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4. Grandmaster Kasimdzhanov should be a familiar name to readers as he won the FIDE Knock-Out World Championship in 2004 and subsequently served as long-time second to Anand. As far as I know, he is currently working with Caruana as well as maintaining his status as a very strong grandmaster in his own right.

On the present DVD, which I received as two large downloads from the ChessBase website, he presents a repertoire for Black in the solid and reputable Nimzo-Indian. The presentation is very detailed. Apart from delivering the repertoire, Kasimdzhanov also dives into why certain moves *shouldn't* be played, explaining carefully what the problems are and thereby providing a context for the viewer when the strongest moves are announced.

It is immediately apparent that Kasimdzhanov has taken his time carefully going over all the lines before recommending them for inclusion in the repertoire. He re-analyzes established

theory and occasionally comes up with surprising conclusions that turn previous evaluations on their heads. Though this procedure should be the standard responsibility of any credible author, in reality it is far from always being the case.

The depth and detail of this repertoire requires the student to be of a certain level, and I would say that the baseline should be set at least at 1800, but could easily be a little higher. The top end is more uncertain because I don't see any reason why a 2400-rated player couldn't use this DVD as a basis for his or her repertoire, as it is that detailed.

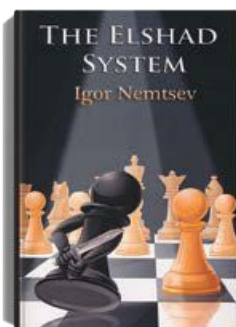
One tiny point of criticism is that sometimes Kasimdzhanov goes through the moves a little too fast, using the forward arrow key a little too aggressively. However, you can always scroll backwards in the analysis to make sure you have understood everything.

Kasimdzhanov has produced several other DVDs for ChessBase, and of those I have seen this is easily the best and it is hard not to be inspired to take up the opening after having been taught so diligently. Yet again, highly recommended.

## 09 The Elshad System

by Igor Nemtsev

MSRP \$ 19.95



Prior to reading this book, I had no idea who its author was and probably even less about the so-called Elshad System. It turns out that Nemtsev is a Russian FIDE Master

and chess trainer. The Elshad System, however, is something else! In chapter one, we are introduced to the madness that this book is all about: 1.d4 c6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3 ♗d7 4.e4 h6 5.f4 g5 6.fxg5 ♙g7 7.gxh6 ♘xh6 8.♗f3 ♗f8 followed by ...♗e6 and ...♗g4. This sets the tone for an entertaining joy ride.

The opening is, of course, nothing

you would regularly come across in most tournaments, nor for that matter in internet play. Therefore, the author has resorted to the use of a great many online games he has played himself against all levels of opponents, identified either by their real name or by their internet handles on various platforms.

In some ways, the book resembles Basman's effort on the St. George many years ago.

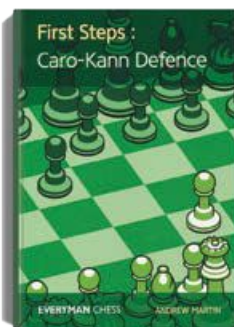
While at first glance the opening may appear laughable, I'm sure it can be very effective in internet play and in games played with shorter time limits. However, it should be mentioned that the author recommends that those who take up the opening should be rated at least 1800. While this may seem puzzling, you do need to have a decent sense of positional understanding, despite the opening's decidedly anti-positional approach, as well as tactical acuity and understanding of how and when to push the envelope.

I would definitely not recommend this book and opening as something to be used as a fixed repertoire choice in over-the-board play with longer time limits, but for anything else, despite its dodgy game references, random pieces of analysis, and its eccentric presentation, it will make for fun times at the chess board or in front of the computer screen on an online platform.

## 10 First Steps: Caro-Kann Defence

by Andrew Martin

MSRP \$ 24.95



*First Steps* is the most recent series from Everyman Chess, aimed directly at those players who are getting their feet wet for the first time in the ocean of opening theory.

According to the back cover: "The *First Steps* books are based around carefully

selected instructive games which demonstrate exactly what both sides are trying to achieve. There is enough theory to enable the improving player to get to grips with the opening without feeling overwhelmed. If you want to take up a new opening, *First Steps* is the ideal place to start." Furthermore, "*First Steps* emphasizes: the basic principles, the basic strategies, the key tricks and traps"

These assertions are noble and in essence what the *Starting Out* series was initially intended to be. However it now seems to have evolved to become quite a bit more than that.

While this book is an introductory text to the opening, I don't think it meets the avowed intent of either the back cover blurb or indeed the other books in this series – or for that matter International Master and Senior FIDE Trainer Andrew Martin's own standards. He is an experienced author with numerous books to his credit, including several really good ones, not to mention his DVDs and many other recordings.

My main complaint with the book is that the moves-to-text ratio does not meet the needs of the novice player. Too many moves that seem primed for explanation go by without a word while too many games given in the notes have scarcely a comment. Another issue is that crucial concepts are not explained in sufficient detail. The focus is more on mentioning alternative moves than actually explaining why one move is better than another, let alone offering comparative evaluations at the end of given variations. Of course, this may have worked if the reader was a little more advanced than the intended audience for this series.

Therefore, I cannot recommend this particular volume for the same level readers as the other books in this series, but it will work as a good starter book for those who are slightly more experienced.

Two other recent books in this series are: *First Steps 1.e4 e5* by John Emms and *First Steps: The Scandinavian* by Cyrus Lakdawala, both of which are more attuned to the declared intent of this series.





# McFarland

“[The] classic McFarland book: a deeply researched, lovingly produced and definitive enquiry into an area of chess with a view to being the last word on the subject” — *British Chess Magazine*

**Neumann, Hirschfeld and Suhle. *19th Century Berlin Chess Biographies with 711 Games*.** Hans Renette and Fabrizio Zavatarelli. 2018, \$75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 384pp., 66 photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-7379-0. Around 1860 a wave of young Berliners, including Berthold Suhle, Philipp Hirschfeld and Gustav Neumann, came to rank among the world's best. Little has heretofore been written about their lives (richly revealed) and games (analyzed in detail). JULY.

**Kurt Richter. *A Chess Biography with 499 Games*.** Alan McGowan.

2018, \$75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), ca. 90 photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-6906-9. This large-scale overview of Richter's life (1900–1969) and games sheds light on a sharp and inventive player and influential editor, with much never-before-seen material. IN PRODUCTION.

**British Chess Literature to 1914. *A Handbook for Historians*.**

Tim Harding. 2018, \$49.95 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), 399 pp., 72 photographs, 23 games, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-6839-0. Exhaustive coverage of almost 600 chess columns and periodicals from 1813 on and 150 years of books. Reference book corrections and supplements. Advice on the leading chess libraries and research on the web. NEWLY PUBLISHED.

**A World of Chess. *Its Development and Variations through Centuries and Civilizations*.** Jean-Louis Cazaux and Rick Knowlton. 2017, \$49.95 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), 408pp., 71 illus., 297 diagrams, 9 maps, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-9427-9. The Persian and Arab game familiar for 500 years; similar games going back 1500 years still played; evolution of strategic board games especially in India, China and Japan; more recent chess variants (board sizes, new pieces, 3-D etc.). “Definitive” — IM John Donaldson ([JeremySilman.com](http://JeremySilman.com)); “impressive...one of the most interesting reads on the history of chess!” — *Chessbook Reviews*; “thoroughly researched...wonderful and unique” — *Mind's Eye Press*.

**W.H.K. Pollock. *A Chess Biography with 524 Games*.** Olimpiu G. Urcan and John S. Hilbert. 2017, \$65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 508pp., 68 illustrations, diagrams, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-5868-4. Englishman Pollock (1859–1896) played in many important American events of the 1800s. “A perfect marriage of subject, author and publisher. Open at random and be entertained.” — *Kingpin Chess Magazine*; **HONORABLE MENTION, BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD** — *Chess Journalists of America*.

STEPHEN SHOEMAKER, AFTER JACOB VAN DER HEYDEN'S 1616 ENGRAVING IN SELENIUS.



**H.E. Bird. *A Chess Biography with 1,198 Games*.** Hans Renette. 2016, \$75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 608pp., 1,198 games, 376 diagrams, 85 illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7578-0. No 19th century player had a longer career — nor more slashing attack games — than Henry Edward Bird (1829–1908). A detailed account of his personal life and vigorous feats. **BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD** — *Chess Journalists of America*.

**Vera Menchik. *A Biography of the First Women's World Chess Champion, with 350 Games*.** Robert B. Tanner. 2016, \$49.95 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 328pp., 21 photographs, appendices, bibliogra-

phy, indexes, 978-0-7864-9602-0. The first woman to compete on an equal basis with the top male players. She dominated women's chess for 17 years and was killed by a Nazi bomb. Games include notes by her, Capablanca, Alekhine, Fine, others. “Incredible collection of games...quality and clarity of material makes it unique” — *Georgia Chess News*.

**José Raúl Capablanca. *A Chess Biography*.** Miguel A. Sánchez. 2015, \$55 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 563pp., 195 annotated games, 55 illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7004-4. “Amazing” — *Huffington Post*; “even the most ardent Capa fan will learn something new” — *Chess Life*; “a luxurious work and a true labor of love” — *Chess News*; “first rate...highly recommended” — IM John Donaldson ([JeremySilman.com](http://JeremySilman.com)).

**Joseph Henry Blackburne. *A Chess Biography*.** Tim Harding. 2015, \$75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 592pp., 1,186 games, 95 illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7473-8. England's greatest chess player of the 19th century. “Comprehensive...beautiful” — *Huffington Post*; “a great love for detail...carefully researched masterpiece” — *Chess News*; “definitive...indispensable” — *Chess Life*.

**Mikhail Botvinnik. *The Life and Games of a World Chess Champion*.** Andrew Soltis. 2014, \$49.95 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 282pp., 107 annotated games, 127 diagrams, photographs, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7337-3. “Brilliant...the best book on Botvinnik by far” — *Chess News*; “another Soltis tour-de-force...fascinating” — IM John Donaldson ([JeremySilman.com](http://JeremySilman.com)); **BOOK OF THE YEAR** — English Chess Federation. **BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD** — *Chess Journalists of America*.

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# WHEN GOOGLE PLAYS THE FRENCH

DEEP MIND, AN AI COMPANY OWNED BY GOOGLE, HAS SIMPLY ENTERED INTO ITS SYSTEM THE RULES OF CHESS. THE PROGRAM, ALPHA ZERO, AVOIDS HUMAN DATA AND LONG-ESTABLISHED HUMAN THEORY, PREFERRING A SINCERE JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY.

by JON EDWARDS

**“TO MAKE THE CLAIM THAT GIVEN ENOUGH TIME AND MONEY TO PERFECT ITS GAME, A COMPUTER COULD BE DESIGNED THAT WOULD BE ABLE TO DEFEAT A CHESS MASTER WAS AS UNNECESSARY AS IT WAS ABSURD...”**

Edward Lasker,  
*American Chess Quarterly*,  
Vol. 1 No. 2, 1961.



When computers first arrived on the chess scene, they played a laughably poor game. Little wonder that Edward Lasker, among many others, was so convinced that they would never

play meaningfully.

Advancements came slowly. Almost every engine used the same brute force approach, examining every possible position that might occur. As processors gained in strength, so did the overall performance. But the approach remained the same, and it contained two inherent flaws.

The first flaw is that more than 99% of all possible continuations are simply silly. No human would spend time taking such moves seriously, but the computers have no choice.

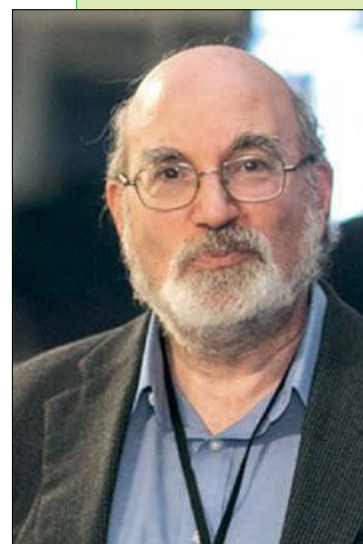
The second flaw is the so-called horizon effect. You might use a very powerful processor and let it run to say, depth 35-40 ply. But the engines quite literally see nothing whatever beyond that depth. And so, if the main line involves a buried bad bishop that will never become active, the computer still sees that the bishop remains on the board.

Deep Blue's programmers considered integrating in a human heuristic by examining similar structures, but most chess programmers have been convinced that the solution is simply to rely upon brute force and the steady advances in processing power.

Some programmers have been clever in working around these two flaws. They have built in huge opening books to guide early play, a human heuristic of sorts, and they place a more intense look at the end-of-lines in an effort to overpower the horizon effect.

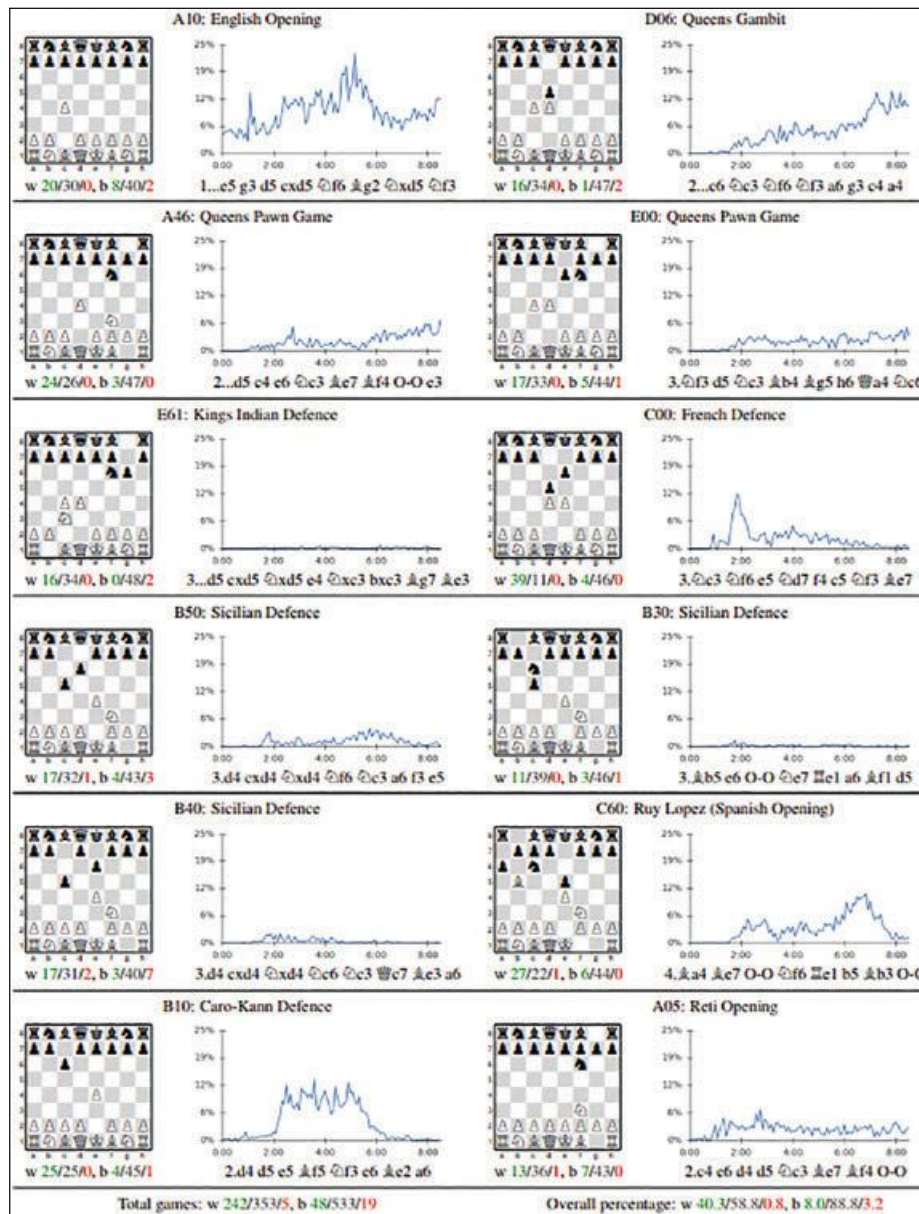
All of that seems to have just changed.

DeepMind, an AI company owned by Google, has simply entered into its system the rules of chess. The program, AlphaZero, has played game after game against itself and involves heuristics designed to emulate human thought. Surprisingly, to me at least,



**Jon Edwards** is an ICCF Senior International Master living in Pennington, NJ. He won the 10<sup>th</sup> US Championship and is now competing in the World Correspondence Candidates. He has written more than 40 chess books, notably *The Chess Analyst* (1999), *Sacking the Citadel* (2010), and *ChessBase Complete* (2014). He is regular columnist for *Chess Life for Kids*. His web site, *Chess is Fun*, provides free chess instruction.





the approach avoided human data and long-established human theory, preferring a sincere journey of self-discovery. Early on, it favored the French Defense, rejecting that after just two hours for the Caro-Kann, and finally settling on the English and the Queen's Gambit. As impressive as that sounds, French devotees will hopefully forgive me for inserting I personally never gave the French more than 10 minutes thought. Please smile.



**TIP 1** DeepMind AlphaZero's analysis of twelve popular openings. The plots show the proportion of self-play games. Early on, AlphaZero favored the French and then the Caro-Kann. With time, it turned to the Ruy Lopez and then to the English and the Queen's Gambit.

Their AlphaGo program used this self-play method to achieve super-human performance, defeating the world's best Go player, Ke Jie in 2015 by a perfect 3-0 score.

On December 5, 2017, DeepMind published a paper, Mastering Chess and Shogi by Self-Play with a General Reinforcement Learning Algorithm. You can read a copy of the paper here:

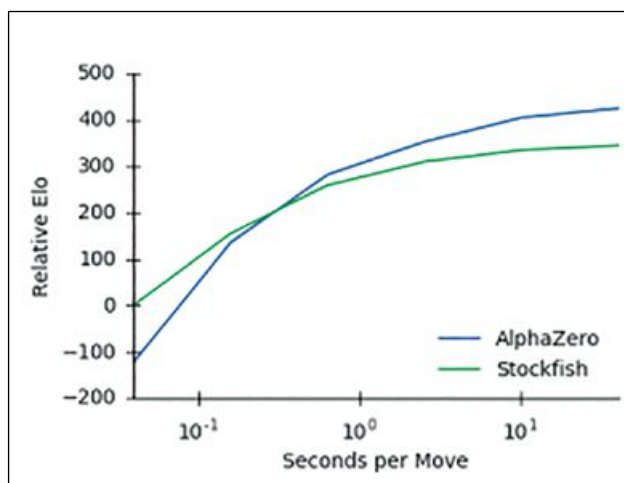
<https://arxiv.org/pdf/1712.01815.pdf>

The result of their effort is nothing short of extraordinary. In a 100 game match against a powerful version of Stockfish, AlphaZero scored 64-36 (28 wins, 72 draws, and not a single loss). Stockfish ran on a PC with 64 threads (probably a 32-core machine) at 70,000,000 positions per second. By contrast, AlphaZero, with its more human-like heuristics, examined only 80,000 positions per second.



**TIP 2** The ELO Rating Performance of AlphaZero vs Stockfish plotted against thinking time per move. AlphaZero and its heuristics appears to benefit more than Stockfish from a greater allotment of time.

The paper provides access to ten of the wins. Lest you prematurely conclude, like Edward Lasker, that this is nothing special, take a careful look at the following highlights.

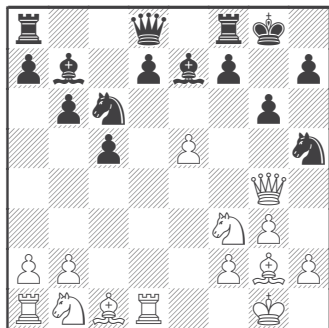




## E15

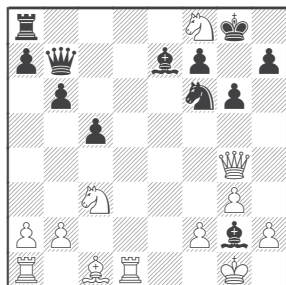
## AlphaZero – Stockfish

1.  $\text{d}3$   $\text{d}6$  2.  $\text{c}4$   $\text{b}6$  3.  $\text{d}4$   $\text{e}6$  4.  $\text{g}3$   $\text{a}6$   
 5.  $\text{c}2$  An opponent of mine in the Spanish Championship tried this line last year. At the end of the game, he mentioned to me that this had been AlphaZero's preference. Not having seen this game, I had no idea what he meant.  
 5...  $\text{c}5$  6.  $\text{d}5$   $\text{exd}5$  7.  $\text{cxd}5$   $\text{b}7$  8.  $\text{g}2$   $\text{dxd}5$  9.  $\text{0-0}$   $\text{d}c6$  10.  $\text{Bd}1$   $\text{e}7$  11.  $\text{Bf}5$   $\text{d}f6$  12.  $\text{e}4$   $\text{g}6$  13.  $\text{Bf}4$   $\text{0-0}$  14.  $\text{e}5$   
 Driving the knight away and gaining control over key dark-squares.  
 14...  $\text{d}h5$  15.  $\text{Bg}4$  15.  $\text{Bc}4$  is the other try, but the last 23 correspondence games in that line all ended in a draw.



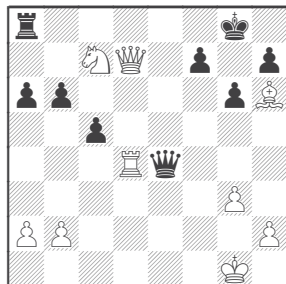
15...  $\text{Bc}8$  Logical, making room for ...  $\text{f}8$ - $\text{g}7$ , but still a strange choice for a computer with an opening book. According to the Mega Database, this position has only been reached 11 times in over-the-board play, but in correspondence, 15...  $\text{Bb}8$  has been played 27 times, with 5 white wins and 21 draws.

My game, Bescos Anzano - Edwards, ESP-MG2-A, 2017/18, continued 15...  $\text{Bb}8$ ! 16.  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{dxe}5$  17.  $\text{dxe}5$   $\text{exg}2$  18.  $\text{dxd}7$   $\text{Bb}7$  19.  $\text{dxf}8$   $\text{d}f6$ .



The Correspondence Chess Database has

14 games left, all draws from here. 20.  $\text{Bf}4$   $\text{Bxf}8$  21.  $\text{B}e1$   $\text{d}d8$  22.  $\text{f}3$   $\text{exf}3$  23.  $\text{Bd}6$   $\text{d}d7$  24.  $\text{h}6$   $\text{e}f6$  25.  $\text{d}b5$  (Avoiding 25.  $\text{exf}8$   $\text{d}d4+$  26.  $\text{c}f1$   $\text{B}a6+-$ ) 25...  $\text{B}a8$  26.  $\text{B}ad1$   $\text{exd}1$  27.  $\text{Bxd}1$   $\text{a}6$  28.  $\text{d}c7$   $\text{e}e5$  29.  $\text{B}e7$   $\text{B}e4$  30.  $\text{Bxd}7$   $\text{d}d4+$  31.  $\text{Bxd}4$



The draw was offered here, a strange final position in which White has a massive material advantage but Black has a perpetual on the move. 31...  $\text{cxd}4$  32.  $\text{dxa}8$   $\text{B}e1+=$ .

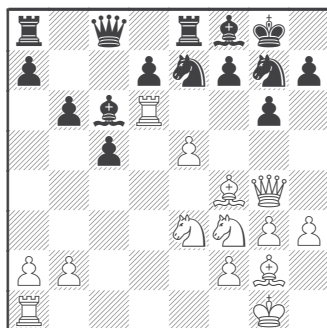
16.  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{Bb}8$  The right idea, pressuring  $\text{e}5$ , but played one move late.

17.  $\text{d}d5$   $\text{Bf}8$  Now upon 17...  $\text{dxe}5$  18.  $\text{dxe}5$   $\text{Bxe}5$  19.  $\text{dxe}7+$   $\text{Bxe}7$  20.  $\text{exb}7+-$ .

18.  $\text{Bf}4$  Holding on to the  $\text{e}5$ -pawn.

18...  $\text{Bc}8$  18...  $\text{dxe}5$  19.  $\text{dxe}5$   $\text{Bxe}5$  20.  $\text{dxe}5$   $\text{Bxe}5$  21.  $\text{Bxd}7$   $\text{Bb}8$  22.  $\text{B}e1+-$ .

19.  $\text{h}3$   $\text{d}e7$  20.  $\text{d}e3$   $\text{Bc}6$  21.  $\text{Bd}6$   $\text{d}g7$



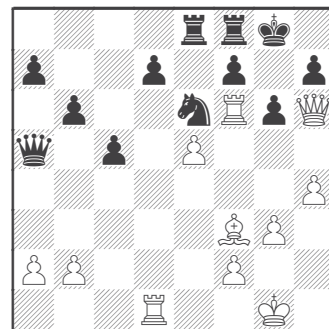
22.  $\text{Bf}6$  What a cool move!

22...  $\text{Bb}7$  I assume that the machine intended 22...  $\text{d}d5$  23.  $\text{dxd}5$   $\text{exd}5$  24.  $\text{Bd}1$   $\text{exa}2$  25.  $\text{d}g5$ .

23.  $\text{h}6$   $\text{d}d5$  24.  $\text{dxd}5$   $\text{exd}5$  25.  $\text{Bd}1$   $\text{d}e6$  26.  $\text{Bxf}8$   $\text{Bxf}8$  27.  $\text{Bh}4$  Maintaining a dark-squared theme. The queen eyes  $\text{h}6$ .

27...  $\text{Bc}6$  28.  $\text{Bh}6$   $\text{Bae}8$  29.  $\text{Bd}6$  With the idea of  $\text{Bdx}e6$  and  $\text{d}g5$ .

29...  $\text{Bxf}3$  30.  $\text{Bxf}3$   $\text{B}a6$  31.  $\text{h}4$ !  $\text{B}a5$  32.  $\text{Bd}1$

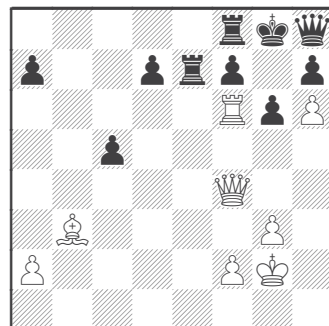


There is much to appreciate in this positional squeeze.

32...  $\text{c}4$  33.  $\text{Bd}5$   $\text{B}e1+$  34.  $\text{c}g2$   $\text{c}3$  35.  $\text{Bxc}3$   $\text{Bxc}3$  36.  $\text{h}5$   $\text{B}e7$  37.  $\text{Bd}1$   $\text{B}e1$  38.  $\text{Bb}3$   $\text{Bd}8$  39.  $\text{Bf}3$   $\text{B}e4$  40.  $\text{Bd}2$   $\text{B}g4$  41.  $\text{Bd}1$   $\text{B}e4$  42.  $\text{h}6$   $\text{d}c7$  43.  $\text{Bd}6$   $\text{d}e6$  44.  $\text{Bb}3$   $\text{Bxe}5$  45.  $\text{Bd}5$   $\text{Bh}8$ ?! 45...  $\text{Bc}7$  46.  $\text{Bfd}3$ .

46.  $\text{Bb}4$   $\text{d}c5$  47.  $\text{Bxc}5$ !  $\text{Bxc}5$  48.  $\text{Bh}4$   $\text{Bde}8$  49.  $\text{Bf}6$   $\text{Bf}8$  No better is 49...  $\text{c}f8$  50.  $\text{Bf}4$   $\text{B}g8$  51.  $\text{Bc}7$ .

50.  $\text{Bf}4$



White is down the exchange but totally dominating the board.

50...  $\text{a}5$  51.  $\text{g}4$   $\text{d}5$  52.  $\text{exd}5$   $\text{Bd}7$  53.  $\text{Bc}4$   $\text{a}4$  54.  $\text{g}5$   $\text{a}3$  55.  $\text{Bf}3$   $\text{Bc}7$  56.  $\text{Bxa}3$  Black is effectively playing without the queen.

56...  $\text{Bxf}6$  57.  $\text{gxf}6$   $\text{Bfc}8$  58.  $\text{Bd}3$   $\text{Bf}8$  59.  $\text{Bd}6$   $\text{Bfc}8$  60.  $\text{a}4$

Black resigned

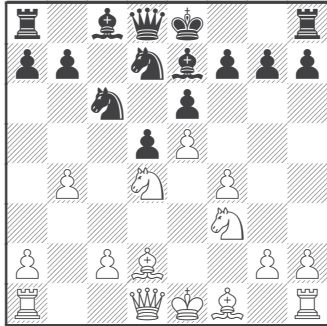
And then there was this remarkable game and combination:

## C11

## AlphaZero – Stockfish

1.  $\text{d}4$   $\text{e}6$  2.  $\text{e}4$   $\text{d}5$  3.  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{d}f6$  4.  $\text{e}5$   $\text{d}fd7$  5.  $\text{f}4$   $\text{c}5$  6.  $\text{d}f3$   $\text{cxd}4$  7.  $\text{d}b5$  7.  $\text{dxd}4$  is the usual move, but AlphaZero seems to have an idea in its mind.

7...♙b4+ 8.♙d2 Gleefully offering up a trade of White's bad bishop.  
 8...♙c5 9.b4 The machine is ambitious, grabbing a stake on the queenside.  
 9...♙e7 The bishop must retreat along this diagonal to maintain control over d6.  
 10.♙bxd4 ♙c6

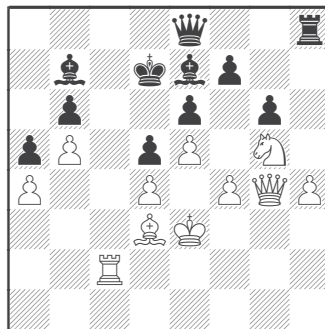


11.c3 The power of the 7.♙b5 idea becomes more clear. White will now recapture on d4 with a pawn.

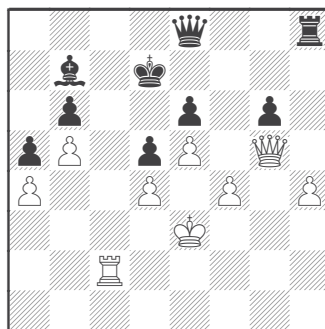


11...a5 12.b5 ♙xd4 13.cxd4 White has much more space and White's development is now easy. The light-squared bishop will settle on d3, White's rooks will find the c-file. More important, how can Black complete its development. If ...b6, for example, Black's knight has no path forward on the queenside.  
 13...♙b6 14.a4 ♙c4 15.♙d3 The knight cannot be defended successfully (...♙c7 ♙c1) and retreating back to b6 is surely unpalatable, but Black might have

targeted White's light-squared bishop with ...♙b2.  
 15...♙xd2 16.♙xd2 Speeding up the deployment of White's major pieces. As it turns out, White's king will be fully fine on e3.  
 16...♙d7 17.♙e3 b6 18.g4 h5 19.♙g1! hxg4 20.♙xg4 Were a rook on g4, Black could now get away with ...g6.  
 20...♙f8 20...g6 21.♙xg6 fxg6 22.♙xg6+ ♙f8 23.♙ag1+-.  
 21.h4 ♙e7 22.♙hc1 You can count on these machines to find the right rook. ♙ac1 opens up a3 for the queen.  
 22...g6 Playable now with Black's queen on e7.  
 23.♙c2 ♙d8 24.♙ac1 ♙e8 Not now 24...♙a3 25.♙g5 ♙e7 26.♙c7+-.  
 25.♙c7 ♙c8 26.♙xc8+ ♙xc8 27.♙c6 ♙b7 28.♙c2 ♙d7 29.♙g5 ♙e7

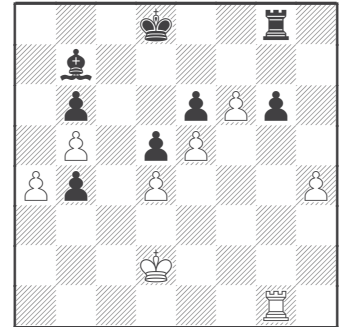


The following sequence is special. Black's position is structurally passive, not just the light-squared bishop. And White's pieces are optimally placed.  
 30.♙xg6! ♙xg5 There's a quick mate after 30...fxg6 31.♙xe6+ ♙d8 32.♙xb6+ ♙d7 33.e6#.  
 31.♙xg5 fxg6

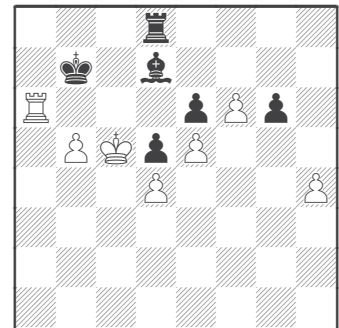


Now what?  
 32.f5! ♙g8 32...gxf5 33.♙g7+ ♙e7 34.♙c7+; 32...exf5 33.♙f6+-.  
 33.♙h6 ♙f7 34.f6 ♙d8 35.♙d2

Making room for ♙e3-c3 or a3.  
 35...♙d7 36.♙c1 ♙d8 37.♙e3 ♙f8 37...♙e8 38.♙c3.  
 38.♙c3 ♙b4 39.♙xb4 axb4 40.♙g1



A remarkable position. White has sacrificed a piece for a pawn and entered an endgame in which Black's pieces have no scope. White can simply bring his king to b4 and pursue operations on both wings.  
 40...b3 41.♙c3 ♙c8 42.♙xb3 ♙d7 43.♙b4 ♙e8 44.♙a1 ♙c7 45.a5 ♙d7 46.axb6+ ♙xb6 47.♙a6+ ♙b7 48.♙c5 ♙d8



49.♙a2 ♙c8+ 50.♙d6 ♙e8 51.♙e7 g5 52.hxg5

**Black resigned**

These games display a positional and tactical prowess that impresses. The public does not yet have access to the software, but I shall not make Edward Lasker's mistake in assuming that this new program is no big deal. It seems to me to be the real thing, and it carries with it enormous implications for the future of chess and, even more important, for the entire field of Artificial Intelligence. ■



# MUSINGS of an AMERICAN GRANDMASTER

by GM JOEL BENJAMIN



## United For a Good Cause

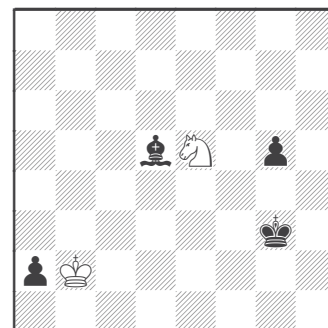
**I**t's important to maintain perspective on the Charity Chess Event in New York City, this year held at Columbia Grammar and Prep School on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Cancer is not just something that happens to smokers; it's an insidious disease that can strike anyone, any time. The take for the day, probably upwards of \$55,000 raised for ovarian cancer research, will benefit the quest to eradicate the deadly disease.

### BURKE'S LAW

But of course, there was a lot of fun that day. I'm going to start my personal story with the main event – the grandmaster blitz tournament. The usual suspects returned, save for a few with other commitments, boosted by a few new faces. Max Dlugy, who has turned blitz chess into a scientific study, repeated as winner with no difficulties at all. I didn't get a chance to take him on this year because I ran into a buzzsaw (who I made the mistake of inviting, on Scott Mero's request, the week before) named John Michael Burke.

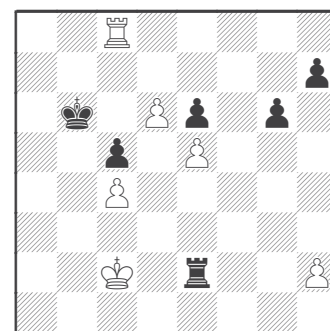
**YOUNG GRANDMASTERS ENTERING THE FRAY, MID-LEVEL GMS MAKING A MOVE FOR THE TOP GROUP, AND THE CREAM OF THE CROP GOING FOR NUMBER ONE, ARE ALL MAKING AMERICAN CHESS FANS PROUD.**

In the four-round double game Swiss, I came in with 3/4 against Michael Rohde and CGPS legend Marc Arnold. It's usually a bad sign when your opponents are getting progressively younger. In the first game, I drifted into an ending I thought I could hold easily. After many maneuvers (the 3 minutes 2 second increment format often stretches out endgames) I found I was mistaken.



It came down to something like this. I can draw by sacrificing my knight for the g-pawn, but Burke played 1...♔f4, dominated my knight and queened the g-pawn.

In the second game I was again outplayed in the endgame.







My time ran out here, and Burke charitably suggested I might be able to hold, but if the white king advances on the b-file, it's really all over.

When I recounted the result to Fedorowicz, he shook his head and said, "you taught him too well," which curiously enough, was what I told my opponent after the games.

It can be a bit bittersweet, but the ultimate goal of the master is to see his student surpass him. Once upon a time, I met a family from New Jersey at the World Youth in Brazil. Given that I now lived in the state myself, it seemed like a good idea to work together during the tournament. I hadn't heard anything about the nine-year-old with a USCF rating on the cusp of 2000. But when I saw John Michael Burke's first game, I realized what I had lucked into.

Oddly enough, it was a loss! His opponent was an Indian boy named, aptly enough, Anand, who turned out to be one of the stronger players in the field. (The pairings were rather random because so many players had no FIDE rating yet.) John Michael played aggressively, with a furious sacrificial assault that came up short. But that wasn't the part that impressed me; it was what he *said* about the game. He pointed out what he was thinking and calculating during the game. He had concrete reasons for all his decisions. He got a few tactics wrong, but it seemed to me that I might not have gotten them right either.

He finished quite respectably in Brazil, and his parents asked me to coach him. The rest as they say, is history...

Coaches may assess their contributions to different degrees. I suppose there are some cases where I might feel I deserve a lot of credit for a student's improvement, but this is not one of them. I helped him improve in areas where he wasn't strong, but understood not to get in the way of his natural style. Which, by the way, was slightly unusual. He was a great attacking player but excelled in the endgame as well.

Still, I would not have expected JMB to acquire the grandmaster title quite this quickly. Part of it may be outdated notions about improvement

timetables; part of it is knowing that John Michael leads a normal life which includes going to school. And even when players approach grandmaster strength, they will fail to make norms on occasion. John Michael had three norm hits in an eight-month span – June 2017 in Philadelphia, November 2017 in St. Louis, and January 2018 in Charlotte – with very few misses. And all this at age 16.

John Michael (he is also happy to answer to John, by the way; the longer appellation does avoid confusion with his father though) had a historically quirky trip through his FIDE titles. In 2015, he notched three IM level performances in a row, while his rating was in the 2200s. Each performance was calculated from the same modest rating. On the theory that young players are notoriously underrated, FIDE created a crazy formula to drunkenly pump bonus points for successes by young players (John Michael was turning 14 around this time). If he had won instead of lost against Cameron Wheeler in the last round of the 2015 U.S. Cadet Championship (a very real possibility at certain moments) he probably would have exceeded *my peak* rating, all before receiving an international title.

It may be cool to be the youngest player to get a 2600 Elo rating, but it's not cool to be the poster child for flaws in the rating system. Playing at solid IM strength, it would have been quite reasonable to zoom his rating up 200 points to 2450. But the new rating made JM self-conscious. He knew he hadn't earned it. And thus could not enjoy it.

It is a bit strange that as John Michael steadily improved and made grandmaster norms, his rating incrementally adjusted *downward* to his current FIDE rating of 2518 (with 2600 USCF), which he is every bit worthy of, if not more.

## ABSOLUTELY FABI-LOUS

Cancer research hopes for a better future, much like families do for their children. The quads and grandmaster simul were dominated by children. Parents want to do whatever they can

for their children's enjoyment and education, and spending the money for charity makes it that much easier. The day is more special for me as a parent, and I was happy to have my family with me at CGPS. I was pleased to see Amy (7) show some interest in learning to play (her former Olympian mother was working on the case), but I was shocked at how enthusiastically Aidan (9) embraced the grandmasters-as-celebrities concept. I generally don't get star-struck around chessplayers; I wonder how autographs can be worth anything because people ask *me* to sign things. But I was eager to build up the special appearance of chess celebrity Fabiano Caruana to my kids. Aidan was happy to hear the news (though he didn't really know who Fabi was), but I was taken by surprise when he asked for something he could have signed by Fabiano. I could have brought a board, or a magazine with him on the cover if I had thought to do so. Instead Aidan queued with a piece of notebook paper to get an autograph. Fabiano has by now gotten used to signing autographs, and was probably told that his hand would fall off he signed anything close to the full complement of letters in his name. It is perhaps a sign of greatness that his autograph looks more like a symbol than a name, and perhaps makes it less likely to be forged as well.

Aidan would go on to get signatures from all the grandmasters present that day. Meanwhile, chess parent mode kicked in as I herded my boy up to take a picture with our distinguished guest.

Now I know Fabiano from way back. I like to tell the story of how I gave him one chess lesson when he was little, in the period he was transitioning from his original coach, Bruce Pandolfini. Ironically, Bruce gave me exactly one lesson as well (my first one). I've been seeing Fabiano on magazine covers for years, so he looked exactly as I expected. But it's about ten years since the last time we met at the Marshall Chess Club, and I certainly have changed. I'm not 100% sure he recognized me, and I'm not sure I would expect him to, but he was gracious in all his interactions, without a trace of diva in him.

A lot more has been written, deservedly so, about Fabiano's recent tournament successes. Caruana achieved his peak rating already four years ago, so there has been no doubt that he is strong enough to challenge for the title. Indeed, he came about as close to winning the Candidates as you can get two years ago before breaking through this year. Winning at the beginning and middle of a tournament is one thing, but finishing strong under pressure is another. It was pretty much smooth sailing until a painful, and to some degree unnecessary (Caruana would love to have 16...♗g4 back) loss to Karjakin. The whole narrative of the tournament had been turned on its side, and many egos would not have been able to deal with it. But Caruana just started another winning streak, culminating in a confident victory over Grischuk in the last round ("why doesn't he offer a draw?" many unskilled onlookers wanted to know), while his rivals could not come close to a win.

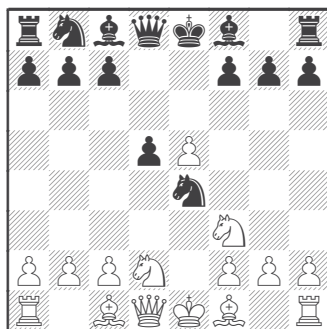
He followed up this great achievement with a smooth victory in the GRENKE Chess Classic, punctuated by another putting-the-boot-in last round win over Vitiugov.

Fabiano Caruana, Aidan and Joel Benjamin.



## Nikita Vitiugov 2735 Fabiano Caruana 2784

Round 9, GRENKE Chess Classic 2018



5...♔d7 was a pretty cool move. I tried a replication of sorts, where I played ♔d8-d7 or ♔d1-d2 in all my banter blitz games on ICC one month, but without the same kind of success. [See the game on Page 63 –Ed.]

I am looking beyond the obvious skill and quality of play to appreciate the mental toughness, which Caruana will need in abundance when he takes on Magnus Carlsen for the World Championship. Caruana has played fearlessly against Carlsen and collected his share of wins. I expect it to be a very competitive match.

## SHANK ATTACK

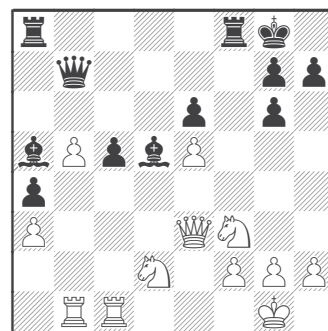
The one event Fabiano didn't win was the U.S. Championship, and this can hardly be considered a failure – 8/11 is a more than respectable score against that competition. Sam Shankland was just even better. I was surprised that Shankland was able to rack up such a big score, but not by his success in general. Sam's punctuated this accomplishment with a demolition of the field in the Capablanca Memorial, his second consecutive 2800+ performance. He may be living the dream,

as he has suggested on social media, but at #30 in the world, Shankland will have to be taken very seriously in the future.

But you might wonder just why is he scoring so well? When I see Sam, I think of adjectives like determined and relentless. He is a problem solver who approaches positions with an objective eye. One moment from Havana sums it up for me.

## Sam Shankland 2671 Yusnel Bacallao Alonso 2594

Capablanca Memorial, Havana 2018



Black has just played 22...♔e7-b7, a serious error in a balanced position. But to the naked eye, Black is doing quite well, with apparent pressure on White's position. Sam realized the move needed was precisely the move Black was trying to discourage – 23.♘c4!

After 23...♗xf3 24.gxf3 ♗xf3 25.♔xc5, Black's kingside attacking chances proved to be illusory – he doesn't have enough pieces to crash through, while the passed b-pawn became a much larger factor in the position. By move 32 Sam had already collected the point.

I am a layman in science and medicine, but I see good things on the horizon in cancer research. As an educated person in the field of chess, I can of course speak more confidently about the future of American chess. Recent events have only confirmed that things are progressing at multiple levels. Young grandmasters entering the fray, mid-level GMs making a move for the top group, and the cream of the crop going for number one, are all making American chess fans proud. ■

# Unknowns and Underdogs

by IM DANNY RENSCH

**D**uring a recent rest day at the 2018 Norway Chess tournament, the best chess players in the world adorned actual chef hats and teamed up for a cooking competition, but perhaps it is more than coincidence that this metaphor goes further?

The great 2007 Disney film *Ratatouille* is a true underdog story: A rat that learns how to cook, and takes these skills to one of the top restaurants in Paris, using a human chef as his puppet to avoid the scorn and death normally afforded to rodents in a kitchen.

A former world champion did so well behind the counter in Norway that the judges asked him if he might consider quitting chess to pursue a career in the culinary arts (Vishy Anand was an underdog himself with a fillet knife but he won the contest nonetheless, along with his teammate, Ding Liren). However, the purpose of my reference is not actually about properly seasoning hollandaise sauce, but rather that *underdogs*, in all facets of life, can and will always come from everywhere!

The reigning world champion himself is from a country that, previously to his rise, had no real chess culture or history to speak of. Without the internet, and access to the world's best with a click of the mouse, we would likely not be in a position to appreciate the genius of Magnus Carlsen.

Now, with the internet, an entire world of unknown chess cooks – chess streamers – is growing on Chess.com. Amateurs from nowhere are becoming chess celebrities for their passion, humorous reflections on their own struggles trying to master a game as difficult as chess, and their deep understanding of their like-minded audiences. These streamers are stars not because of their high-level chess moves, but because they can *relate* and *connect* with their fans in ways that chess professionals may never be able to do.

Perhaps no amateur will ever draw the large audience that Fabiano Caruana (twitch.tv/gmfabianocaruna) or Hikaru Nakamura (twitch.tv/gmhikaru) do when they get behind a camera and stream their chess games, but Fabiano and Hikaru are busy – while Sam Park (twitch.tv/myteachersam) and Michael Kimble (twitch.tv/mikeyslice) are hard at work trying to get better at chess and grow a fan base along the way.

Many are aware that Chess.com agreed to a partnership with Twitch Interactive back in November of 2017, but may not know that our goals always went way beyond creating high-level, big prize events for our flagship tournaments like the PRO Chess League and Speed Chess Championship. Our co-investment aims to bring the most famous quote from Disney's movie true to life! Chef Gusteau: The next great cook could come from anywhere and be anyone!

Chess has big goals to grow in the world of internet gaming. Our game of kings aspires to be an esport that brings a depth

**“...NOT  
EVERYONE CAN  
BECOME A GREAT  
ARTIST, BUT A  
GREAT ARTIST  
CAN COME FROM  
ANYWHERE.” —  
RATATOUILLE**



and legacy beyond any video game fad, but it takes more than big events with prizes available only to the world's elite to build the culture and appreciation of a sustainable eco-system.

The video game Fortnite survives not just because the Twitch superstar Ninja (twitch.tv/ninja) plays it in front of millions, but because at any given time, there are 5,000 people playing and 50 fans per channel interested in hanging out with their friends...laughing while watching the highs and lows of a video game as tricky as Fortnite.

Members of the “Chess.com and Twitch Partner Streamer Program” (that’s a mouthful; I’ll think about renaming it!) have the same intentions in mind: try to master a game they love, connect with fans (friends!) to build relationships that matter, and be supported by the community for their hard work.

Could it ever be more than just a hobby for our underdog streamers?

No amateur streamer has reached the level of the most popular chess channel on Twitch – twitch.tv/chessbrah, which was founded by GM Eric Hansen. Chessbrah is supported by hundreds of paying subscribers (Twitch members pay \$4.99 a month to support their favorite gamers), but many of our “non-titled player” partners have dozens of paying subs already, and even receive donations from anonymous chess philanthropists like “chessbae94” on a regular basis.

Sure, they’re underdogs. And no, not everyone can become a famous chess streamer...but don’t be surprised when streamers like “Bikfoot” (twitch.tv/bikfoot) and the Bughouse chess specialist “Helmsknight” (twitch.tv/helmsknight) become household names of their own.

Even the harshest food critic from *Ratatouille*, Anton Ego, agrees: Regardless of who made the food, if it’s enjoyable and delicious, they don’t have to be a master chef to be worthy of our admiration and support.



## CHESS PARENT'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

# Going to Nationals: STAKE YOUR CLAIM TO SOME TERRITORY!

AS ONE OF THE BEST THINGS YOU CAN DO AT A NATIONAL TOURNAMENT IS STAKE A CLAIM ON SOME VALUABLE REAL ESTATE IN THE SKITTLES AREA OR THE HALLWAYS (IF PERMITTED). GETTING THE SAME PLACE EACH DAY IS ALSO A GOOD IDEA, SO KIDS KNOW WHERE TO FIND YOU WHEN THEY ARE FINISHED WITH THEIR GAMES.

by **RYAN VELEZ**

As the US Chess Elementary, Junior High, and High School National tournaments have concluded for the 2017-2018 school year, players and teams can begin thinking about next year's tournament schedule. As they do, I recommend considering the following information well in advance. Doing so will make the trip less expensive and your overall experience smoother. If you are newer to chess, these tips will be especially helpful (a lot of them can apply to state level events as well).

1

## MAKE A FOOD PLAN!

Chess games end at unpredictable times and this can be especially difficult for kids whose games go the full round time. You need to have a combination of healthy snacks and meals ready to go at a moment's notice. Many national tournaments do not actually allow food in the playing hall; therefore, it is best to do your eating before and after rounds. I recommend eating healthy foods in smaller increments throughout the day instead of larger meals. Then, as a sendoff, go out for a nice dinner after the event is over.

2

## STAKE YOUR CLAIM TO SOME TERRITORY!

One of the best things you can do at a national tournament is stake a claim on some valuable real estate in the skittles area or the hallways (if permitted). Getting the same place each day is also a good idea, so kids know where to find you when they are finished with their games. Keep in mind that the younger your kids are, the more likely they will need some place that is close by or very easy to find. Parents with kids who are K-4<sup>th</sup> grade tend to sit close to the tournament hall. The Rosa Parks Elementary School parents from Lexington, KY bring their own folding chairs and collapsible mesh-and-nylon-style table and set up outside the playing hall as an easy go-to place for their kids.

3

## PAIRINGS, PICTURES, PLAYERS AND PARENTS!

US Chess tries to get pairings out between 30-minutes to 1-hour before the next round. During this period, parents begin migrating into the room with their kids. Parents will find their child's board number and color and seat them. Then, they will want to get photos of their kid sitting at the board. All of this is just fine; however, you should do your best to be out of there 10 minutes before the round begins. Parents who hang around in the tournament hall delay the start of the round and you will notice the tournament staff starts to get a bit grouchy. Keep this in mind and you will be helping make the event efficient.

# 4

## PROTECT YOUR TIME!

At nationals, chess boards are provided to help the tournament start on time. Therefore, you do not specifically need to bring your own board. However, US Chess does not provide chess clocks. I highly recommend you have a chess clock at each of your games whether it is your opponent's or yours. If both players do not have a chess clock, then the game will start without one. However, as one becomes available, we'll put a clock on your game and split the remaining time between the players. This can be viewed as problematic because one player may have used a lot more time to think when there was no clock. Had there been a clock, that thoughtful player would have burned a lot of their own time. Therefore, you can protect yourself from having to split time with an opponent who thinks too much by having your own clock.



New Jersey 2018, Photo by Stevan Dobrojevic.

# 5

## VACATION OR TOURNAMENT?

Before buying your airline tickets or loading up your car, you need to determine your purpose and focus for making this trip. Is it a mini-vacation for the family or is your goal to do the best you possibly can at the tournament? Either decision is just fine but doing both simultaneously can affect one or the other. If it is a vacation, then it should not be surprising if Sally loses a game or two because she just got back from visiting a local attraction and didn't have time to rest. If it is not a vacation, then odds are you won't leave the tournament venue too often. My advice is to approach it in whatever way is best for the players. If you feel your kids need a vacation but they also like chess, then treat it as a vacation. If you feel they have worked hard all year and want to see how they stack up against the best competition, then don't approach it like a vacation. It pays to plan when you decide to attend a national event. Buying plane tickets in advance, booking your hotel early, determining if you are going to eat at restaurants, the hotel, or go grocery shopping can really help save money as well. If you or your team intend to fundraise, the sooner you start the better.

Ryan Velez was taught chess at the age of three by his mother. During his first year of high school, he attended his first chess competition and went undefeated. From that point on he found his niche in the chess community as a player. Then, after several tournament victories, he found his niche as a chess instructor starting in 2001. Now, Ryan is a National Chess Master and multi-time state champion. He spends most of this time writing up chess training materials to assist coaches in the classroom. Ryan has served as a delegate in the US Chess Federation for 4 years and has worked with different chess companies from around the country. He is also an active tournament organizer in and around Kentucky.

American Chess Magazine endorses Ryan Velez, one of our writers, for the US Chess Executive Board. We support our writers whenever we can and this endorsement is one example. Attached is a flyer that contains many of Ryan's views within the chess community. Please review it before you cast your votes in the next few weeks.

We have found Ryan to be very insightful and easy to work with. We feel he will give many different groups of people a voice while he serves on the Executive Board and it is why we give our full endorsement.

ACM Staff and  
Editor in Chief Josip Asik

## RYAN VELEZ: I BELIEVE...

- US Chess must increase its outreach to under-represented groups such as the 18-30 year old group we seem to lose touch with, women and girls, and seniors — many of whom have issues with tournament times, conditions and the vulnerability of their ratings. We need to listen to them.
- ★
- US Chess needs to create online resources so a member or prospective member can easily find contact information for clubs or coaches in their area.
- ★
- US Chess needs to make a critical re-evaluation of Chess Life and Chess Life Kids. We must address how many magazines we need and what content would best meet the needs of the membership at all age and strength levels.
- ★
- US Chess needs to have an increased reserve fund for unexpected economic downturns. A million dollars (about what we have now) only gets you about 3 to 4 months. A strong non-profit should have a year's back up.
- ★
- In the past, I have offered the board my services (gratis) in creating e-books on the US Chess site to help people in a variety of areas of chess. I haven't been taken up on the offer. When elected to the board, I'll make sure we start doing this.



# VON DOREN

NORWEGIAN DESIGN  
SWISS QUALITY



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## IT'S TIME

Taking a number of subtle style cues from chess, the Grandmaster Mark II watches evoke the spirit of the game that has captivated legions of followers for well over 1,000 years.

The Grandmaster Mark II - elegant, stylish, robust and enduring.  
With time, we're confident that 'iconic' will also be added to that list.

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[www.vondoren.com](http://www.vondoren.com)

Model: Grandmaster Mark II Automatic,  
Limited Edition. Only 200 pieces made.



EXTRAORDINARY CHESS PLAYERS ALSO HAVE EXTRAORDINARY TASTES IN LUXURY WATCHES

# WHO IS INTO ROLEX?

IN THE EYES OF THE PUBLIC, CHESS PLAYERS ARE OFTEN SEEN AS ASCETICS WHO ARE SO DEEPLY ENGROSSED IN THE 64 SQUARES THAT THEY DO NOT PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO THE EVERYDAY PLEASURES OF LIFE. BUT IS THIS MOSTLY THE CASE? THE ACM FELT DUTY BOUND TO CARRY OUT A LITTLE RESEARCH...

by OYVIND VON DOREN ASBJORNSEN

**F**irst and foremost, we were curious to learn who in the chess community are wearing Rolex watches. And to our surprise we discovered that extraordinary chess players also have extraordinary tastes in luxury items, which go beyond merely being an iconic symbol of a successful life.

Our expert in this field is Oyvind Von Doren, who is not only an avid chess player and enthusiast but a manufacturer of one of today's most fashionable watch brands: "Von Doren Timepieces". In fact Oyvind's company is currently sponsoring the world junior champion, fellow Norwegian, GM Aryan Tari. He also directed and produced *The Prince of Chess* (2005) about Magnus Carlsen and was Executive Producer and Photographer on the Tribeca nominated feature film *Magnus* (2016). It says much for Oyvind's own fascination with chess that one of his exclusive designs is dedicated to the royal game – many of whose elite grandmasters he knows personally...

**?** Themed watches are often designed for those engaged in nautical or aerial pursuits, due to their practical application in these fields as well as the obvious marketing opportunities. Could chess, with all its mystery, become a significant zone of influence where different brands will one day compete against each other?

I am an avid amateur player and have had a great interest in chess from my childhood, I was inspired both as a former filmmaker and a spectator to create a customized no-nonsense watch for chess players. There are a lot of watches around with many complicated features like chronograph and even split-second flyback chronograph, alarm repeaters and equation of time, just to mention a few. But here we believe in a

clean elegant design displaying simply the hour, minutes and seconds, as a chessplayer does not really need more than that. That said, in my opinion it is also very elegant with moon phase too, so we will be experimenting a bit more with that on our next model.

**?** Wearing a wristwatch is not only about time but also about fashion and status. To which category do you think chess stars belong? Have you personally been surprised with the results of your own research?

The top players are definitely celebrities and many of them are also very fashion conscious, but if I had to choose one category then my research indicates that there is a lot of status involved too. It seems to



▲ Oyvind Von Doren Asbjornsen

me that these grandmasters do not just buy some random watch at an airport or shopping mall but give serious consideration to their choice of timepiece and that pleases me a great deal. Also I know some GMs who are using my watches like a daily beater. That also makes me very happy. And as one Norwegian GM said half-jokingly to me: "I am really worthy of wearing my Grandmaster watch since I am a GM!" Let's meet some of the "most fashionable" chess players!

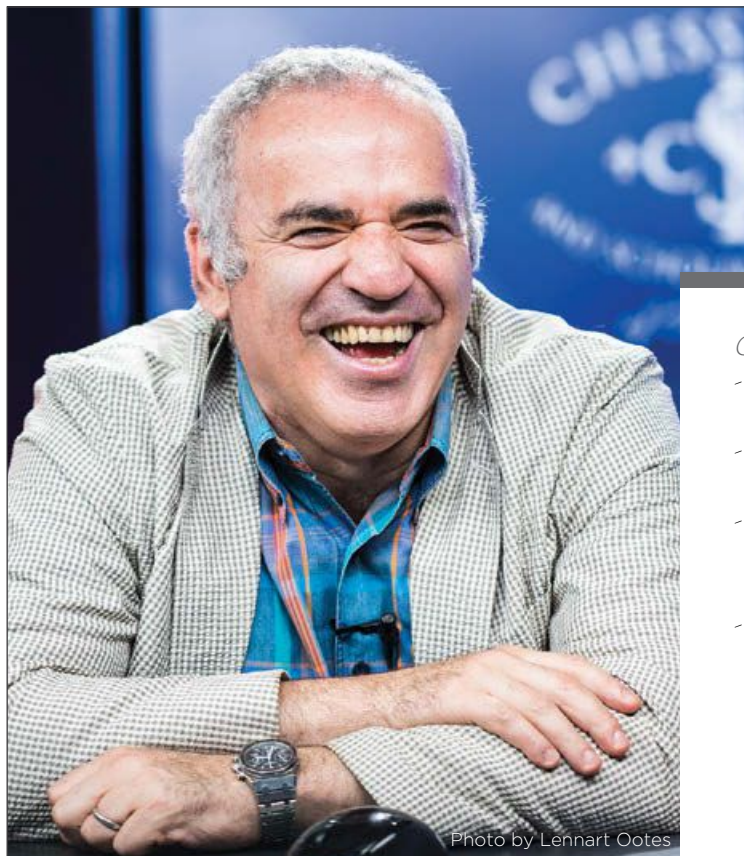


Photo by Lennart Ootes

## GARRY KASPAROV

### AUDEMARS PIGUET ROYAL OAK CHRONOGRAPH

**A traditional, exquisite and expensive watch.**

*Price: From approx. \$27,000*

Audemars Piguet was founded in 1875 in Le Brassus, Switzerland, and is one of the oldest manufacturers of exclusive watches. Together with Patek Philippe and Vacheron Constantin, they are considered to be one of the “Big Three/Holy Trinity”.

Garry Kasparov has a very special relationship with Audemars Piguet as they created a 18 Karat Yellow Gold Millenary Limited Edition Wristwatch in honour of him. A well-known watch among chess lovers and watch geeks. Limited to 150 pieces, the watch has a special “chessboard” dial, with Roman numbers, yellow gold hands, and sub-dials for date and second time zone, and fan-form power reserve retrograde indicator. Interestingly, it came with a special edition box, consisting of a wooden chess board and carved chess pieces. The timepiece is no longer available for sale.

Later Garry Kasparov had been spotted with his Audemars Piguet Royal Oak Chronograph. (The one he is wearing in the photo) This watch is the ultimate dream for many watch aficionados all over the world. A masculine, expensive and exquisite watch that also might reflect the personality of Kasparov.

### HISTORY

The first Royal Oak Offshore was launched in 1993 with its sizeable 42 mm diameter. The watch was considered to set the trend for oversized watches.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF BUYERS

- Who like watches with sporty and masculine features on the watch
- Who are fans of the Audemars Piguet brand or those who are interested in AP's commitment to technical progress
- Who are interested in showing their status since the watch is expensive with advanced details and luxurious metals in some of the variations.
- Who are interested in watches and horology.



### SPECIFICATIONS

- Movement: Audemars Piguet calibre 3126/3840
- 60-hour power reserve, a stop-seconds mechanism for the main timekeeping train, and a solid 22k gold rotor for automatic winding
- Case Diameter: 42-44mm
- Pushpiece-guards
- In 2014, AP launched new variations of the watches. It comes with various cases (stainless steel, yellow gold, platinum, ceramic, pink gold, and titanium)



# HIKARU NAKAMURA

## ROLEX SEA DWELLER DEEPSEA

Sporty ultra resistant diver from one of the world's most famous brands.

Price: From approx. \$13,000

Hikaru Nakamura has been spotted with different types of watches and it seems he is very fond of them and in particular his Rolex Sea Dweller Deepsea, with an impressive waterproof of up to more than 12,000 feet. He was awarded the watch at the Central Chess Club in Moscow in 2017, for winning the Zurich Chess Challenge three times in a row. He is obviously very happy with this watch as he was wearing it every day when he played the Fischer Random Match against Magnus Carlsen in Oslo earlier this year.

The Sea Dweller is a very masculine and quite heavy watch that can also show some status as Rolex is a luxury watch brand. He has also been spotted with other watches in a classical style with a white dial too.

### HISTORY

Rolex is one of, if not the most recognisable watch names today. But the Rolex company is rather young compared to other wrist and pocket watch makers such as Patek Philippe (founded in 1839), Omega (founded in 1848), Audemars Piguet (founded in 1875) and the very long history of Vacheron Constantin (founded in 1755).

However the founders Wilsdorf and Davis did not settle for being just another watch company. In just over 20 years, Rolex had achieved over 20 world records. These included the now infamous Rolex Oyster case, the world's first truly waterproof watch thanks to the screw back and screw lock crown – an innovation still in use today, and the first true perpetually wound (automatic) watch, which became the now highly sought after “bubble back watch”

Designed for divers and deep-water activities.



### SPECIFICATIONS

- Movement: Rolex caliber 3235 Perpetual, mechanical, self-winding movement
- Case diameter: 44mm
- Waterproof to a depth of 3900 meters
- Power reserve: approx. 70 hours
- Watch case: oystersteel



Photo by Lennart Ootes

### CHARACTERISTICS OF BUYERS

- Those who are interested in diving or water activities
- Those who want to show their status as Rolex has always profiled themselves as a luxury brand, used by the champions in different sports.
- Those interested in watches and horology.



## GAWAIN JONES

TISSOT HERITAGE VISODATE  
AUTOMATIC

Elegant, classic and reliable.

Price: From approx. \$ 680

A classic and reliable vintage looking automatic watch with day and date at 3 o'clock. This is Tissot going back to its heritage from the 50's. Tissot was founded in 1853 by Charles-Félicien Tissot and his son Charles-Émile Tissot in the Swiss city of Le Locle, Switzerland.

Tissot introduced the first mass-produced pocket watch as well as the first pocket watch with two time zones in 1853 and the first anti-magnetic watch in 1929-30. Tissot merged with Omega in 1930 and Tissot-Omega watches from this era are highly sought after by collectors. Tissot has been a member of The Swatch Group Ltd. since 1983, the largest watch producer and distributor in the world.

A solid choice that reflects reliability, solidity and an eye for vintage. A watch that will make you look great either with a suit or sporty casual wear.

### HISTORY (FROM TISSOT'S WEBSITE)

Back in the 1950s, Tissot celebrated its centenary with a series of innovations – one of which was the integration of a date function to the automatic mechanism in a watch called Visodate. The Tissot Heritage Visodate translates nostalgia into contemporary timepieces dedicated to detail. A gently curved dial mirrors the domed sapphire glass, both geared to showcasing a clearly visible day and date.



### SPECIFICATIONS

- Movement: ETA 2836-2 Swiss automatic
- Power reserve of 38 hours, 25 jewels
- Water resistant up to 30M
- 316L stainless steel case
- Case Diameter: 40mm

### CHARACTERISTICS OF BUYERS

- Who like elegant, vintage design, perfect for those who usually wear suits/formal clothes
- Who prefer to own a well-known automatic Swiss watch at an affordable price



Photo by Lennart Ootes

## ANISH GIRI

VON DOREN GRANDMASTER, CAISSA AUTOMATIC

Classic elegance with a hint of vintage, made for the world's best players.

Price: From approx. \$ 2,900 (sold out)

This watch was designed by the young Norwegian watch company Von Doren. It is a Swiss Made automatic watch made specially for The Norway Chess tournament in the city of Stavanger last year, where the ten highest rated players in the world competed. At the prize ceremony all contestants were awarded a Von Doren Grandmaster by founder Oyvind Von Doren Asbjornsen, a keen chess fan and former filmmaker – now watchmaker, who made the two films about Magnus Carlsen.

Anish Giri has been spotted numerous times with the Von Doren Grandmaster on his wrist.

## VESELIN TOPALOV

JORG HYSEK KILADA

A cool choice from a “young brand” with a revolutionary design

Price: From approx. \$2,000 and upwards (depending on quartz or mechanical)

This watch was from the first collection of Jorg Hysek, as a watch brand. In 2000 they even made a rare tourbillon watch in only 30 pieces. The watch looks good, is comfortable to wear and has great quality.

### HISTORY

Launched in 1997. This was the first collection of Jorg Hysek as a watch brand.

Photo: Lennart Ootes



### SPECIFICATIONS

- Movement: available with both quartz movement and automatic movement. For automatic watches, the power reserve is 44 hours with 51 jewels
- Case diameter: 44mm
- Water resistance: 50M
- Dial: exclusive HYSEK Stamping
- Rubber bracelet

### CHARACTERISTICS OF BUYERS

- The watch has a really special design and shape. It is suitable for those who want different and unique watches. This watch can make the wearer stand out of the crowd and we think it really fits great with Topalov's personality.



### SPECIFICATIONS

- Watch diameter: 43 mm
- Swiss made – assembled by hand
- Movement: Automatic STP 5-15 self-winding movement
- 26 Jewels, 28 800 vibrations 4Hz
- Glass: Double-domed sapphire crystal, flat sapphire crystal on case back
- Watch case: Polished stainless steel
- Power reserve: 44 hours
- Strap: Italian handcrafted leather
- Lug width: 20mm

### HISTORY

A young up-and-coming Norwegian brand that makes limited edition watches with clean lines and classic Scandinavian design. Founded in 2016 they have already put their name on the map by releasing 8 different models and 3 Mechanical watches.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF BUYERS

- Those who value the unique and rare. Vintage design with a twist.
- Those who prefer to own a watch not too many others own
- Those who like the clean design language and vintage items.







## VLADIMIR KRAMNIK

BLANCPAIN FIFTY FATHOMS 5015-1130-52

**An iconic, non-mainstream and unique watch.***Price: From approx. \$12,000*

Blancpain, founded in Villeret, Switzerland in 1735, make high-quality mechanical watches and the Fifty Fathoms was conceived even before the Rolex Submariner and the Omega Seamaster.

Kramnik too has a special relationship with the manufacturers of his watch, as he has been doing promotionals for Blancpain for many years now. They even made a special watch with his portrait engraved on the winding rotor of the automatic edition. Blancpain proudly stated that there had never been such a thing as a Blancpain quartz watch. And none will exist in the future. The special one they made for Kramnik in 2005 is a Villeret Time Zone in white gold. Outfitted with two time displays, one for local time, the other for home time. The 254 individual component automatic movement delivers 100 hour power reserve. The hand decoration and polish of the movement's components can all be admired through the sapphire case back.

The one he is wearing on the photo is the Fifty Fathoms 5015-1130-52.

The Fifty Fathoms was originally designed in 1953 by Captain "Bob" Maloubier for Blancpain, a real hero of the Allied army and French Military Forces in World War II, he was chosen to design military equipment for the most selected closed group of French military, the Combat Divers.

Maloubier designed the Fifty Fathoms according to Combat Divers' standards and asked Blancpain to execute his design. In 1953 the Fifty Fathoms was born and introduced in Basel, one year before the Rolex Submariner.



Photo by Lennart Ootes

## CHARACTERISTICS OF BUYERS

- Those who like a tough, sporty and masculine watch, as well as outdoor activities.
- Those interested in watches and horology.

## SPECIFICATIONS

- Movement: Calibre 1315, self-winding
- Power reserve: 120 hours, 35 jewels
- Case diameter: 45mm
- Water resistance: 30 bar



## HISTORY

The success of the Fifty Fathoms with Combat Divers was soon followed by other military units. The Israeli, Spanish, German and US armed forces also included it in their military equipment.



## VARUZHAN AKOBIAN

### THE MOVADO MUSEUM WATCH – MODERN CLASSIC

A design watch with style. Modern classic. A different and non-traditional choice.

Price: from approx \$850



#### SPECIFICATIONS

- Movement: Swiss Quartz movement with analog display
- Battery: 2-3 years
- Stainless steel watch featuring round minimalist dial with signature museum dot at 12 o'clock and dauphine hands
- Case Diameter (mm): 40mm
- Synthetic-sapphire crystal dial window
- Features stainless steel buckle closure and leather band
- Water resistant to 30 M

Akopian has been spotted with different kinds of watches. It seems he is very fond of the iconic watch brand Movado. The watch was featured in a permanent collection of Museum of Modern Art in New York. That's why it was called the Museum watch.

This is a watch for those who enjoy minimalistic design. Buyers prefer the appearance over the functionality and movement of the watch. It is a bit harder to read the exact time on the dial, which might just be the meaning. You get the time more or less exact up to a minute or two since there are no minute or hour markers. This might reflect a casual and laid back attitude and more attention to design and style than telling the exact time.

#### HISTORY

The dial was designed by Nathan George Horwitt, an American Jewish-Russian immigrant. He said: "We do not know time as a number sequence but by the position of the sun as the earth rotates". The design of the watch is special since it does not have any markers but only a single dot at the top to signal the sun at its highest point.

The watch was featured in a permanent collection of Museum of Modern Art in New York. That's why it was called the Museum watch.



Photo by Lennart Ootes

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF BUYERS

- Those who are in love with the minimalistic design. The buyers prefer the design over the functionality and the movement of the watch. It is almost impossible to see the correct time with this watch dial. At the same time, it has a quartz movement, which means buyers only need to change the battery after 2-3 years.

## THE BEAUTY OF CHESS COMPOSITION

# INSPIRED BY MILAN VUKCEVICH

By IM PIOTR MURDZIA

Solutions on page 149

**W**hen thinking of the world's most respected chess composers, you can't omit Milan Vukcevic. His problems have been inspiring me from the first moment I became acquainted with his work. Clear and precise presentation of the idea, full harmony and economy, surprising moves – this is the style Milan was following in his art.

Apart from gaining the grandmaster title for chess problem composition, Milan Vukcevic was also a strong player with the title of international master. Holding both titles of such distinction is a remarkable and unique achievement. Nevertheless it is interesting to understand his attitude towards both activities as expressed in his book published in 1981: *Chess by Milan, Problems and Games of Dr. Milan R. Vukcevic*. "The art of problem composing and the logic of problem solving do not need to be defended. They exist by themselves [...]. What I am trying to do is to convince the chessplayers

and the problemists alike, that all existing and imaginable forms of chess have the one and most important thing in common: the logic by which the method of conquest is selected."

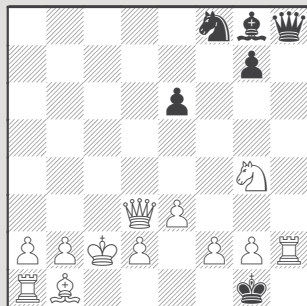
It is sufficient reason to write about Milan Vukcevic, having in mind only his genius, but there is one more aspect that may appeal to American readers. In 1963 Milan Vukcevic moved from Belgrade, where he was born, to the USA and spent the rest of his life there.

So let's have a look at Milan's outstanding work. I have tried to choose those problems that contain the best features of the author's creativity and which may therefore also attract the chessplayer's attention.



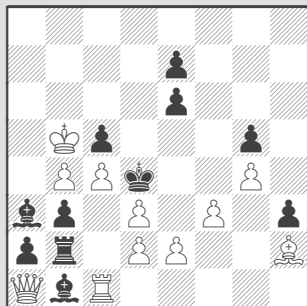
**Piotr Murdzia** is an International Master (with 3 GM norms) and Solving Grandmaster. He has won the World Chess Solving Championship seven times and the European Chess Solving Championship eight times. In 2009 he published his first book entitled *Secrets of Solving – Solve with the champion of the world*.

**01** Milan Vukcevic  
*StrateGems* 1998  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize



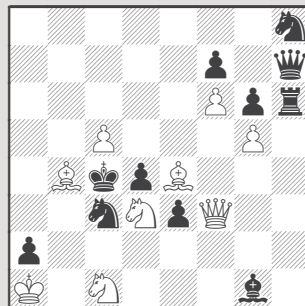
Mate in three

**02** Milan Vukcevic  
*Die Schwalbe* 1971  
1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Prize



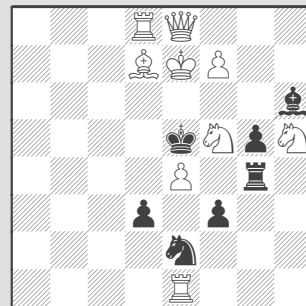
Mate in three

**03** Milan Vukcevic  
*Die Schwalbe* 1971  
3<sup>rd</sup> Prize



Mate in four

**04** Milan Vukcevic  
*Wola Gutowska* 1996  
2<sup>nd</sup> Prize



Mate in two

# Igor's Chess Doubles

by IM IGOR KHMELNITSKY

Solutions on page 151



I'd like to introduce you to series of special exercises that I have been designing for many years to help my students in improving their tactical vision, calculation and defensive skills. Readers of my award winning Chess Exam and Training Guide and other books know that I have a passion for creating chess puzzles that serve multiple purposes. Well, these exercises will open your eyes on nuances of chess tactics and help you to jump start your calculation skills. At the same time, the exercises are fun and not overly complex. Anyone should be able to follow them without a chessboard.

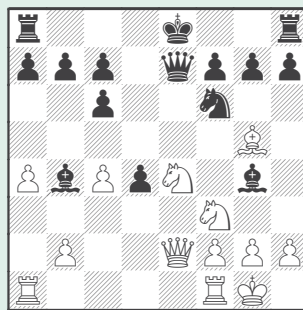
For each pair

1. See who is to move.
2. Answer the question - Does Black prefer position A, position B or indifferent? Explain why.

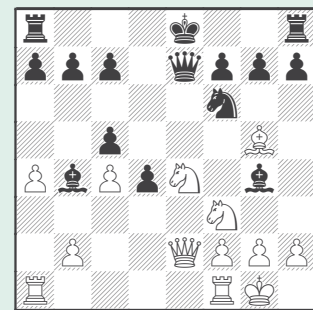
1A

EASY

1B



White to Move



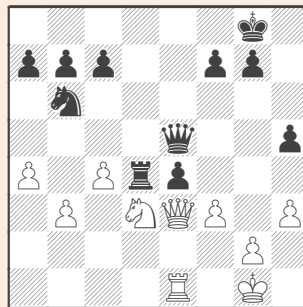
White to Move

3  
points

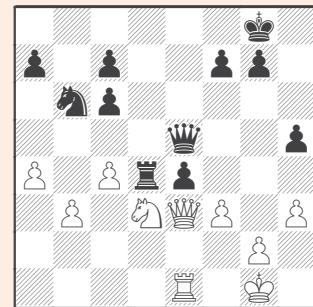
2A

MODERATE

2B



Black to Move



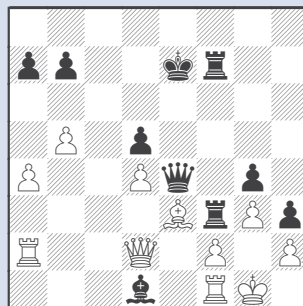
Black to Move

6  
points

3A

HARD

3B



Black to Move



Black to Move

8  
points



# TOURNAMENT REVIEW

**MARCH – MAY 2018**

## SEATTLE, WA

March 2-4, 2018

*Seattle Super Masters (5 rounds)*

1. Yaroslav ZHEREBUKH **5**
- 2-3. Julio SADORRA,  
Andrey GOROVETS **3½**
- 4-6. Steven BRECKENRIDGE, Megan  
LEE, Ignacio PEREZ **3**
- 7-8. Joseph LEVINE,  
Aaryan DESHPANDE **2½**
- 9-11. Anthony BI HE, Jason YU,  
Peter WATTS **2**, etc.

## COLUMBUS, OH

March 2-4, 2018

*Arnold Schwarzenegger Open  
(5 rounds)*

- 1-2. William SEDLAR, Scott RAMER **4**
- 3-5. Jason WANG, James MILLS,  
Aristo LIU **3½**
- 6-7. Maggie FENG, Elton CAO **3**
- 8-14. Rohan TALUKDAR, Adam  
GERVER, Abhinav RAMASWAMY,  
Vikram SRIVASTAVA, Justin LIANG,  
Lance WINTERS, Kabir BELGIKAR **2½**,  
etc.

## VAN NUYS, CA

March 2-4, 2018

*25<sup>th</sup> Western Class Championship  
(5 rounds)*

- 1-4. John BRYANT, Melikset KHACHIAN,  
Robert AGHASARYAN, Dionisio ALDAMA **4**
- 5-6. Keaton KIEWRA, Ali MORSHEDI **3½**
- 7-11. Philip WANG, Zuhao LI,  
Michael CASELLA, Brandon XIA,  
Alex KOLAY **3**, etc.

## SAINT LOUIS, MO

March 6-14, 2018

*2018 Spring Chess Classic*

### Group A

1. Jeffery XIONG **6½**
- 2-4. Dariusz SWIERCZ,

ACM would like to invite tournament organizers and players to submit announcements, results and games to be featured in Tournament Review section. Send your submissions to [office@acmchess.com](mailto:office@acmchess.com) or visit [www.acmchess.com/submit](http://www.acmchess.com/submit). Information published here is free of any charge. For advertising space, visit [www.acmchess.com/advertise](http://www.acmchess.com/advertise)

- Sam SHANKLAND, Varuzhan AKOBIAN **5**  
5-6. Lazaro BRUZON,  
Romain EDOUARD **4½**  
7-8. Alexander ONISCHUK,  
Yaroslav ZHEREBUKH **4**  
9. Alexander IPATOV **3½**  
10. Surya GANGULY **3**

### Group B

1. Victor MIKHALEVSKI **7**
2. Andrey GOROVETS **6**
3. Priyadarshan KANNAPPAN **5½**
- 4-6. Evgeny SHTEMBULIAK,  
Melikset KHACHIAN, Akshat CHANDRA **4½**
- 7-8. Awonder LIANG, Cemil CAN **4**
9. Alexandr FIER **3½**
10. Aaron GRABINSKY **1½**

## HOUSTON, TX

March 16-18, 2018

*Lone Star Open (5 rounds)*

1. Andrey BARYSHPOLETS **5**
- 2-7. Kamil DRAGUN, Hovhannes  
GABUZYAN, Bartłomiej MACIEJA,  
Angel ARRIBAS, Guillermo VAZQUEZ,  
Oziel JUAREZ **4**
- 8-12. Vladimir BELOUS, Justin WANG,  
Yannick KAMBRATH, Iryna ANDRENKO,  
Sam CAPOCYAN **3½**, etc.

## ROCHESTER, NY

March 17-18, 2018

*40<sup>th</sup> Marchand Open (5 rounds)*

1. Alex FISHBEIN **4½**
- 2-5. Alexander SHABALOV, Artiom  
SAMSONKIN, Holden HERNANDEZ,  
Sergey KUDRIN **4**
- 6-13. Sergei AZAROV, Fidel CORRALES,  
Aleksandr OSTROVSKIY,

- Lev PACIORKOWSKI, Daniel HE,  
Eugene HUA, Ben DEAN-KAWAMURA,  
Kevin ROULHAC **3½**, etc.

## CLAYTON, MO

March 23-25, 2018

*22<sup>nd</sup> Mid-America Open (5 rounds)*

1. Vasif DURARBAYLI **4½**
- 2-5. Alex SHIMANOV,  
Priyadarshan KANNAPPAN,  
Fidel CORRALES, Joshua COLAS **4**
- 6-8. Matthew WENDELL,  
Venkat SARAVANAN,  
Nicholas ROSENTHAL **3½**
- 9-20. Akshat CHANDRA, Denes BOROS,  
Aaron GRABINSKY, Tansel TURGUT,  
Gopal MENON, Okechukwu ANELE,  
Jason WANG, Thalia CERVANTES,  
Aydin TURGUT, Jack EASTON,  
Steven COOKLEV, Marissa LI **3**, etc.

## DULLES, VA

March 23-25, 2018

*51<sup>st</sup> Virginia Open (5 rounds)*

1. Zhou JIANCHAO **4½**
- 2-4. Aleksandr OSTROVSKIY,  
Praveen BALAKRISHNAN, Rohan AHUJA **4**
- 5-11. Levy ROZMAN,  
Teghsuren ENKHBAT,  
Anton DEL MUNDO, Qindong YANG,  
Missaka WARUSAWITHARANA,  
Alex JIAN, Mark HYLAND **3½**, etc.

## SANTA CLARA, CA

March 23-25, 2018

*IM Walter Shipman Memorial (5 rounds)*

- 1-5. Enrico SEVILLANO,

Cameron WHEELER,  
Vignesh PANCHANATHAM, Ivan KE,  
Henry WANG 4  
6-7. Sijing WU, Eric YUHAN LI 3½  
8-13. Justin FENG, Vyom VIDYARTHI,  
Paulo SANTANNA, John CANESSA,  
Milind MAITI, Daniel CHENG 3, etc.

#### PHILADELPHIA, PA

March 28 - April 1, 2018  
12<sup>th</sup> Philadelphia Open (9 rounds)

1. Li RUIFENG 7  
2-7. Zhou JIANCHAO,  
Alexander SHABALOV, Gil POPILSKI,  
Christian PEDERSEN,  
Vignesh PANCHANATHAM, Carissa YIP 6½  
8-14. Samuel SEVIAN, Sergei AZAROV,  
Joshua SHENG, David BRODSKY,  
Praveen BALAKRISHNAN, Andrew HONG,  
David PENG 6, etc.

#### CHARLOTTE, NC

March 28 - April 4, 2018  
Spring 2018 CCCSA GM/IM/JUNIOR  
Invitational

##### GM norm

1-2. Tanguy RINGOIR, Michael BROWN 6  
3. Steven ZIERK 5½  
4-5. Ashwin JAYARAM, Kassa KORLEY 5  
6. Denes BOROS 4½  
7-8. John BARTHOLOMEW, Philip WANG 4  
9. Craig HILBY 3½  
10. Brandon JACOBSON 1½

##### IM norm

1. Christopher YOO 6  
2. Angelo YOUNG 5½  
3-5. John LUDWIG, Gauri SHANKAR,  
Sahil SINHA 5  
6-7. Felix YNOJOSA,  
Roberto DEL CAMPO 4½  
8. Justin PAUL 4  
9. Tianqi WANG 3  
10. Annie WANG 2½

#### RENO, NV

March 30 - April 1, 2018  
Larry Evans Memorial Open (6 rounds)

1-2. Fidel CORRALES, Chao ZHANG 5  
3-5. Melikset KHACHIYAN,  
Carlos MATAMOROS, Sergey KUDRIN 4½  
6-9. Atanas KOLEV, Enrico SEVILLANO,  
Dmitry ZILBERSTEIN, Teemu VIRTANEN 4

10-13. Michael LANGER, Megan LEE,  
Michael AIGNER, Alex KOLAY 3½, etc.

#### SAINT LOUIS, MO

April 6-8, 2018  
Bill Wright Saint Louis Open (5 rounds)

1-3. Illia NYZHNYK, Alex SHIMANOV,  
Fidel CORRALES 4  
4-5. Akshat CHANDRA, Joshua COLAS 3½  
6-8. Priyadharshan KANNAPPAN,  
Aaron GRABINSKY,  
Venkat SARAVANAN 3  
9-14. Cemil CAN, Anna SHAREVICH,  
Spencer LEHMANN, Claudio ABUD,  
Jason ZHOU, Isaiah GADSON 2½, etc.



#### CINCINNATI, OH

April 6-8, 2018  
2018 Cincinnati Open (5 rounds)

1. William SEDLAR 4½  
2-5. Joshua POSTHUMA, Scott RAMER,  
Jason WANG, Charles DIEBERT 3½  
6-14. Ronald BURNETT, James MILLS,  
Lester VAN METER, Xavier PAGANINI,  
Elton CAO, Justin LIANG, Adam GERVER,  
Arthur XU, Aryan BALYAN 3, etc.

#### NEW YORK, NY

April 6-8, 2018  
Marshall Premier (5 rounds)

1-2. Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV, Jay  
BONIN 4½  
3. Justin CHEN 4

4-10. David BRODSKY, Akira NAKADA,  
William GRAIF, Khaled MONA,  
Liran ZHOU, Alan ZHANG,  
Liam PUTNAM 3, etc.

#### OKABOJI, IA

April 20-22, 2018  
Okaboji 2018 (5 rounds)

1. Priyadharshan KANNAPPAN 5  
2. James NEAL II 4  
3. Robert REYNOLDS 3½  
4-7. Samrug NARAYANAN, Tim ENTEE,  
William MURRAY, Tony THOMPSON 3  
8-14. Michael TAKAHASHI,  
Steven CUSUMANO, Kenneth FEE Jr,  
John BAKER, Cub NOBLE, Stuart  
KONEZNY, Jonathan REIGENBORN 2½,  
etc.

#### BETHLEHEM, PA

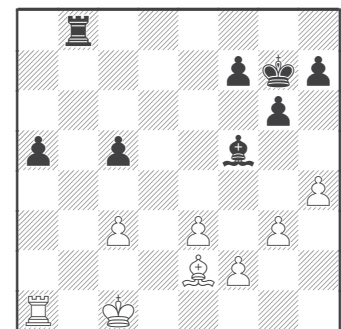
April 21, 2018  
4<sup>th</sup> Bruce Alberston Memorial (5 rounds)

1. Igor KHMELNITSKY 4½  
2-4. Reinaldo TRUJILLO,  
Noah THOMFORDE-TOATES,  
Gracy PRASANNA 4  
5-8. Bryan SMITH, Boris PRIVMAN,  
Matthew O'BRIEN, Ram SINGH 3½  
9-16. Kevin SANTO, Akalp GADRE,  
Daniel SIMBOLI, Sriraman GOLI,  
Christopher GIANNARAS, Daniel REILLY,  
Humberto VARGAS, Dhriti IYER 3, etc.

Igor Khmelnytsky  
Bryan Smith

2469  
2421

Alberston Memorial G30+5  
(Notes by IM Igor Khmelnytsky)



I rarely venture to play these days. When I do, I am grateful to be able to survive against often younger and well prepared opponents. First and foremost I rely on calculation skills.

Ability to identify the nuances of a position and calculate variations accurately is the key to success when your training time is limited or virtually non-existent.

The following example is from my last round game in the Bruce Alberston Memorial, which is organized annually by Bruce Davies in Bethlehem, PA, about 70 miles North of Philadelphia. GM Bryan Smith and I had both scored 3½/4 before this deciding last round game in which I had been defending a slightly worse position throughout. My talented opponent must have sacrificed material on four or five occasions, but I kept my cool and either returned or declined his “gifts”. As we got down to less than ten minutes, the action picked up.

Finally, I was able to conjure up a few tactics myself – trading a pair of rooks and neutralizing his activity. When we arrived at the diagrammed position, we each had under five minutes.

Happy that the tide had turned, I was about to grab the a5 pawn, but then noticed the perpetual check. Next, I thought – if only I had the f-pawn on f3, I would just play e2-e4 and shut down the bishop. Alas the pawn was on f2, but I wanted to pursue the idea of attacking the bishop by any means. And then I immediately saw 34.g4!. After this move the black bishop no longer could stay on the diagonal and control b1 since 34...♙e4 is met by 35.f3. White won the a5 pawn and soon the game. Speaking of nuances, if only Black had his h7 pawn on h5 or if White’s pawns were on f4 or g5, the result could have been different. Very little things like this can have a huge impact on the result of the game.

34.g4!± 34.♙xa5? ♖b1+ 35.♙d2 ♖b2+ 36.♙e1 ♖b1+ 37.♙d2=. 34...♙e6 35.♙xa5 c4 Bryan is panicking and doesn’t put much fight. He only had under 2 minutes left to my 4+. 36.f3 No rush! 36...♖b3 37.♙c2 ♖b6 38.♙c5 ♖a6 39.♙xc4 ♙xc4 40.♙xc4 ♖a2+ 41.♙d3 ♖h2 42.g5 ♖f2 43.♙f4 ♙f8 44.c4 ♙e7 45.♙d4 ♙e6 46.♙c5 ♖e2 47.♙c6 ♖d2 48.c5 Black resigned

### STURBRIDGE, MA

April 27-29, 2018  
27<sup>th</sup> Eastern Class Championship  
(5 rounds)

- 1-2. Samuel SEVIAN, Alexander KATZ 4½  
3. Sergei AZAROV 4  
4-5. Brandon JACOBSON,  
Lawyer TIMES 3½  
6-14. Alexander IVANOV, Mika BRATTAIN,

Gabriel PETESCH, Ryan SOWA, Farzad ABDI, Nithin KAVI, Liran ZHOU, Yelfry TORRES, Alan ZHANG 3, etc.

### COCOA BEACH, FL

April 27-29, 2018  
25<sup>th</sup> Space Coast Open (5 rounds)

1. Hedinn STEINGRIMSSON 4½  
2-4. Li RUIFENG, Fidel CORRALES,  
Yunier RIVERA 4  
5-8. Alexey DREEV, John LUDWIG,  
Cesar VALIDO, Eric COOKE 3½  
9-15. Yan MIELLIER,  
Pedro HERNANDEZ-PEREZ,  
Vlad YANOVSKY, Carlos ANDRETTA,  
Nickolas MOORE,  
Ravindra WIJESUNDERA,  
Dario TEODORI 3, etc.



### MILPITAS, CA

April 27-29, 2018  
GM Mammedyarov Championship  
(5 rounds)

1. Enrico SEVILLANO 4½  
2-5. Jack ZHU, Teddy COLEMAN,  
Ezra CHAMBERS, Krishna NATHAN 4  
6. Rui YANG YAN 3½  
7-12. Stanislav KITSIS, Rochelle WU,  
Vyom VIDYARTHI, Eric YUHAN LI,  
Henry WANG, Anaiy SOMALWAR 3,  
etc.

### ROCKVILLE, MD

May 4-6, 2018  
64<sup>th</sup> Maryland Open (5 rounds)

1. Sergei AZAROV 4½  
2-3. Justin PAUL, Andrew SAMUELSON 4  
4-7. Alex FISHBEIN, Eugene HUA,

Andrew ZHENG, Ralph ZIMMER 3½  
8-12. Tegshsuren ENKHBAT, Chao ZHANG,  
Sarkhan GASHIMOV, Justin SARKAR,  
Jason MOREFIELD 3, etc.

### NEW YORK, NY

May 4-6, 2018  
Marshall Premier Fide Open (5 rounds)

- 1-3. Hedinn STEINGRIMSSON, Kassa  
KORLEY, Jay BONIN 4  
4-7. Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV,  
Aleksandr OSTROVSKIY,  
Haik MANUELIAN,  
Bahadur KHODZHAMKULIEV 3½  
8-9. Akira NAKADA, Rawle ALLICOCK 3  
10-15. Liran ZHOU, Sarathi RAY,  
Eddy TIAN, Alan ZHANG, Winston NI,  
Bora YAGIZ 2½, etc.

### CHICAGO, IL

May 5-6, 2018  
2<sup>nd</sup> Haymarket Memorial (4 rounds)

- 1-6. Vladimir GEORGIEV, Alexander  
VELIKANOV, Gopal MENON,  
Jonathan KOGEN, Vishnuvardhan ARJUN,  
Rithwik MATHUR 3  
7-9. Todd FREITAG, Matthew WILSON,  
Tom BAREKET 2½  
10-14. Bennett JOSEPH,  
Isaac STEINCAMP, Austin EARSLEY,  
Alex ZHAO, Yuvraj CHENNAREDDY 2,  
etc.

### RICHARDSON, TX

May 5-6, 2018  
2018 DCC FIDE Open V (5 rounds)

- 1-2. Kacper DROZDOWSKI, Zurab  
JAVAKHADZE 4½  
3. Anh NHU NGUYEN 4  
4-7. Rithik POLAVARAM, Max HUANG,  
Rohit GUNDAM, Sreenevash RAMESH 3½  
8-10. Alex MOORE, Jonathan ALLEN,  
Rudransh RAJARAM 3, etc.

### SAINT LOUIS, MO

May 15-23, 2018  
Summer Chess Classic

### A Group

- 1-2. Varuzhan AKOBIAN,  
Vasif DURARBAYLI 6  
3. Samuel SEVIAN 5½  
4-6. Jeffery XIONG, Yaroslav ZHEREBUKH,  
Benjamin BOK 4½





- 7-8. Peter PROHASZKA,  
Aleksandar INDJIC 4  
9. Daniel FRIDMAN 3½  
10. Rinat JUMABAYEV 2½

#### Tie-break

- Vasif DURARBAYLI 2  
Varuzhan AKOBIAN 0

#### B Group

1. Kamil DRAGUN 6½  
2. Andrey STUKOPIN 5½  
3-4. Robert AGHASARYAN, Cemil CAN 5  
5-7. Alejandro RAMIREZ,  
Sergei MATSENKO,  
Dinara SADUAKASSOVA 4½  
8. Joshua FRIEDEL 4  
9. Vladimir BELOUS 3  
10. Tatev ABRAHAMYAN 2½

#### BERKELEY, CA

May 18-20, 2018  
Women's Western States Regional  
Championship (5 rounds)

- 1-2. Megan LEE, Rochelle WU 4½  
3-4. Saikhanchimeg TSOGTSAIKHAN,  
Ashley PANG 3½  
5-8. Badamkhand NOROVSAMBUU,  
Rui YANG YAN, Lauren GOODKIND,  
Elizabeth SHAUGHNESSY 3  
9-11. Barbara GOODKIND, Emily LU,  
Brenda MUNOZ 2½, etc.

#### HERNDON, VA

May 18-22, 2018  
2<sup>nd</sup> North Eastern Masters Invitational

#### GM norm

- 1-2. Aleksandr LENDERMAN,  
Priyadharshan KANNAPPAN 7  
3. Aleksandr OSTROVSKIY 6½  
4. Craig HILBY 6  
5. Alder ESCOBAR 5½  
6. Christopher WOOJIN YOO 4  
7-8. Nikola NESTOROVIC,  
Praveen BALAKRISHNAN 3½  
9. Farai MANDIZHA 1½  
10. William MORRISON ½

#### IM norm

1. Raja PANJWANI 7½  
2-4. Alonso ZAPATA, Wesley WANG,  
Sahil SINHA 5  
5-6. Anton DEL MUNDO, Justin PAUL 4½  
7. Arvind JAYARAMAN 4  
8. Tegshsuren ENKHBAT 3½

## SOLUTION

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### 01

This is a real case when you can help an over-the-board player by asking him to point out the most dumb move in the position which will achieve the goal. Yes, this is indeed amazing: 1.♖h7!! But first let's try to understand the task. In order to deliver mate a solver has to clear the first rank for the rook. It is not easy since both tries, 1.♙b3 or 1.♙c3, are met by checks, respectively by 1...e5+ and 1...g6/g5+. More experienced solvers will notice an additional threat 1...♗xh2. After the key, White threatens 2.♖h1+ ♙g2 3.♗e4#. Black can defend by three captures of the white queen: 1...♗xh7+ 2.♙c3!; 1...♙xh7+ 2.♙b3!; 1...♙xh7 2.♙d3! The side variations are: 1...g6 2.♖h1+ ♙g2 3.♗b7# and 1...♙f1 2.♖h1+ ♙e2 3.♗d3#.

### 02

Milan Vukcevic was a great fan of the Bristol theme and he composed many problems using it in different patterns. The idea of the theme is to open a line for a like-moving piece to barrel down the same line. This requires anticipation. Only in the further action does the reason for the key become clear.

Here, Milan Vukcevic used the theme to put on display his extraordinary imagination. The Bristol

theme works only as a tricky try. After 1.♖h1?? everything is fine after 1...♙c2 2.♗g1#. However, after 1...cxb4 White is in zugzwang! The solution is 1.♗f1!! and only after 1...cxb4 we witness the delayed Bristol: 2.♖h1!! ♙c2 3.♗g1#!! If 1...♙c2 then 2.♗e1!.

### 03

Another variation of the Bristol theme accomplished by Milan is to double it up. After 1.♙a8!, threatening 2.♗b7 and 3.♙b2#, Black can strike back and play 1...♖h1!. This is a very tricky defence since after 2.♗b7?? Black puts White in zugzwang by 2...♗h2!! Instead of 2.♗b7 White should play 2.♗c6! (threat 3.♗a6+ ♙b5 4.♗a2#). After 2...♗h2 White in return can put Black in zugzwang by 3.♗b7!. A really appealing masterpiece.

### 04

This problem is quite easy, but be careful, as you could fall into the trap if you rush with your answer.

1.♙a8! threatens 2.♙d8#. 1...♙f4/1...♙d4 2.♗b8# (Bristol effect). 1...♙xe4 2.♙d6#, 1...♙xe4 2.♙a5#. But 1.♙a4? doesn't work. White threatens 2.♙d7#. 1...♙xe4 2.♗b5# (again Bristol effect). However 1...♙f4! is the refutation.

- 9-10. Josiah STEARMAN,  
Jeevan KARAMSETTY 3

#### WHEELING, IL

May 24-28, 2018  
27<sup>th</sup> Chicago Open (9 rounds)

- 1-3. Alex SHIMANOV, Andrey STUKOPIN,  
Awonder LIANG 7  
4-8. Samuel SEVIAN, Anton KOVALYOV,  
Alexander SHABALOV, Sergei AZAROV,  
Dionisio ALDAMA 6½  
9-20. Vasif DURARBAYLI, Li RUIFENG,  
Kamil DRAGUN, Hovhannes GABUZYAN,  
Vladimir BELOUS, Cemil CAN,  
Akshat CHANDRA, Ashwin JAYARAM,

Carlos ALEJANO, Safal BORA,  
Aleksandr OSTROVSKIY,  
Sam SCHMAKEL 6, etc.

#### ATLANTA, GA

May 25-27, 2018  
Phillip Taylor Georgia State  
Championship (5 rounds)

- 1-2. Ben FINEGOLD, Benjamin MOON 4½  
3. Anand SRINIVASAN 3½  
4-6. Vedic PANDA, Prateek MISHRA,  
Weston SHARPE 3  
7-11. Yuri BARNAKOV, David VEST,  
Kapish POTULA, Leonardo PAREDES,  
Timothy BROOKSHEAR 2½, etc.

**FORT WORTH, TX***May 25-28, 2018**Texas State and Amateur Championship  
(7 rounds)*

1-2. Kacper DROZDOWSKI,  
Zurab JAVAKHADZE **5½**  
3-4. Angel ARRIBAS, DAVID GASTON **5**  
5-6. Emily NGUYEN, Jack EASTON **4½**  
7-15. Michael LANGER, Sam CAPOCYAN,  
Daniel HUNG, Daniel JOHNSTON,  
Mark DEJMEK, Alex MOORE, Kevin LIU,  
Rithik POLAVARAM, Segev ELIEZER **4**, etc.

**CONSHOHOCKEN, PA***May 25-28, 2018**1<sup>st</sup> East Coast Open (7 rounds)*

1-4. Priyadarshan KANNAPPAN, Alex

FISHBEIN, Bryan SMITH,  
David BRODSKY **5**  
5. Thomas BARTELL **4½**  
6-9. Sergey ERENBURG,  
James DE TOLEDO, Ivan BIAG,  
Abhimanyu MISHRA **4**  
10-15. Stanislav BUSYGIN,  
Matthew O'BRIEN, Tejas RAMA,  
Robert FORNEY, Terry LUO, Boyang  
ZHAO **3½**, etc.

**DULLES, VA***May 25-28, 2018**6<sup>th</sup> Cherry Blossom Classic (7 rounds)*

1-2. Elshan MORADIABADI,  
Fidel CORRALES **6**  
3-4. Jesse KRAAI, Ronald BURNETT **5**  
5-11. Alder ESCOBAR,

Nikola NESTOROVIC,  
Michael ROHDE, Alonso ZAPATA,  
Josiah STEARMAN, Ralph ZIMMER,  
Neo ZHU **4½**, etc.

**SANTA CLARA, CA***May 26-28, 2018**Best Of The West Class Championship  
(6 rounds)*

1. Conrad HOLT **5½**  
2. Melikset KHACHIYAN **5**  
3-7. Jack ZHU, Siddharth BANIK,  
Ashritha ESWARAN, Eric LI,  
Henry WANG **4½**  
8-12. Vincent MCCAMBRIDGE,  
Rochelle WU, Sijing WU, Krishna NATHAN,  
Shaashwath SIVAKUMAR **4**, etc.

# TOURNAMENTS

## from **ABROAD**

**AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS***February 22- March 4, 2018**10<sup>th</sup> Batavia Chess GM*

1. Alexandr FIER **6½**  
2. Ivan SOKOLOV **6**  
3-4. Robby KEVLISHVILI, Miguel RUIZ **5**  
5-6. Thomas BEERDSEN,  
Friso NIJBOER **4½**  
7. Liam VROLIJK **4**  
8. Anna ZATONSKI **3½**  
9-10. Alina KASHLINSKAYA,  
Manuel BOSBOOM **3**

**MOSCOW, RUSSIA***March 2-5, 2018**11<sup>th</sup> Tal Memorial***Rapid**

1. Viswanathan ANAND **6**  
2-4. Shakhriyar MAMEDYAROV, Sergey  
KARJAKIN, Hikaru NAKAMURA **5**  
5-6. Boris GELFAND, Alexander  
GRISCHUK **4½**  
7-8. Vladimir KRAMNIK, Daniil DUBOV **4**  
9-10. Peter SVIDLER, Ian  
NEPOMNIACHTCHI **3½**

**Blitz**

1. Sergey KARJAKIN **10**  
2. Hikaru NAKAMURA **8½**

3. Ian NEPOMNIACHTCHI **7½**  
4-6. Vladislav ARTEMIEV,  
Alexander GRISCHUK, Vladimir KRAMNIK **7**  
7-8. Daniil DUBOV, Dmitry ANDREIKIN **6½**  
9-10. Viswanathan ANAND,  
Peter SVIDLER **6**  
11-13. Alexander MOROZEVICH,  
Vladimir FEDOSEEV,  
Shakhriyar MAMEDYAROV **5**  
14. Boris GELFAND **4**

**REYKJAVIK, ISLAND***March 6-14, 2018**Bobby Fischer Memorial (9 rounds)*

1. Baskaran ADHIBAN **7½**  
2-3. Maxime LAGARDE, Mustafa  
YILMAZ **7**  
4-20. Eugene PERELSHTEYN,  
Erwin LAMI, Pavel ELJANOV,  
Richard RAPPORT, Suri VAIBHAV,  
Alejandro RAMIREZ,  
R. PRAGGNANANDHAA,  
Elshan MORADIABADI, Deimante  
CORNETTE,  
Johan-Sebastian CHRISTIANSEN,  
Matthieu CORNETTE, Emre CAN,  
Konstantin LANDA,  
Nodirbek ABDUSATTOROV,  
Gata KAMSKY, Hannes STEFANSSON,  
Kidambi SUNDARARAJAN **6½**, etc.

**BATUMI, GEORGIA***March 16-29, 2018**19<sup>th</sup> European Individual Championship  
(11 rounds)*

1. Ivan SARIC **8½**  
2-8. Radoslaw WOJTASZEK,  
Sanan SJUGIROV, Gawain JONES,  
Maxim MATLAKOV, Luke MCSHANE,  
Anton KOROBOV, Eltaj SAFARLI **8**  
9-32. Tamir NABATY, Evgeniy NAJER,  
Anton DEMCHENKO, Nils GRANDELIUS,  
Daniil YUFFA, David NAVARA,  
Ernesto INARKIEV,  
Robert HOVHANNISYAN,  
Ivan CHEPARINOV, Benjamin BOK,  
Santos RUIZ, Anton GUIJARRO DAVID,  
Mircea-Emilian PARLIGRAS,  
Ferreira VITERBO, Nijat ABASOV,  
Arman PASHIKIAN, Alexey SARANA,  
Hrant MELKUMYAN, Rauf MAMEDOV,  
Gadir GUSEINOV, Mikhail KOBALIA,  
Boris SAVCHENKO, Daniel FRIDMAN,  
Kirill SHEVCHENKO **7½**, etc.

**CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA***March 29 - April 2, 2018**O2C Doeberl Cup*

1-2. Timur GAREYEV, James MORRIS **7½**  
3. Igor BJELOBRK **7**



4-6. Ma QUN, Mu KE, Junta IKEDA **6½**  
7-10. Deep SENGUPTA, Brandon CLARKE,  
Gary LANE, Ari DALE **6**, etc.

## DUBAI, UAE

April 2-10, 2018  
20<sup>th</sup> Dubai Open

1. Diego FLORES **7½**  
2-4. Eduardo ITURRIZAGA,  
S. P. SETHURAMAN, Ahmed ADLY **7**  
5-11. Surya GANGULY, Gawain JONES,  
Yuriy KRYVORUCHKO,  
Vladislav KOVALEV, Eltaj SAFARLI,  
Emre CAN, Zahar EFIMENKO **6½**, etc.

## LIAOCHENG, CHINA

April 7-10, 2018  
China vs World Team Rapid (9 rounds)

## China - World Team 30-20

Yu YANGYI **7**, Ding LIREN **6½**, Bu  
XIANGZHI **6½**, Daniil DUBOV **5½**,  
Wei YI **5½**, Jan-Krzysztof DUDA **4½**,  
Santosh VIDIT **4½**, Li CHAO **4½**, Sam  
SHANKLAND **3**, Etienne BACROT **2½**.

## VYSOKE TATRY, SLOVAKIA

April 7-20, 2018  
19<sup>th</sup> European Women's Championship  
(11 rounds)

1. Valentina GUNINA **9**  
2-8. Nana DZAGNIDZE,  
Anna USHENINA, Ekaterina ATALIK,  
Antoaneta STEFANOVA,  
Elisabeth PAEHTZ, Klaudia KULON,  
Polina SHUVALOVA **8**  
9-13. Aleksandra GORYACHKINA,  
Gunay MAMMADZADA, Iulija OSMAN,  
Lela JAVAKHISHVILI,  
Karina SZCZEPKOWSKA **7½**, etc.

## SHARJAH, UAE

April 11-20, 2018  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sharjah Masters (9 rounds)

1. Parham MAGHSOODLOO **8**  
2-3. Eltaj SAFARLI, Wang HAO **7**  
4-14. S. P. SETHURAMAN,  
Vladislav ARTEMIEV,  
Yuriy KRYVORUCHKO,  
Eduardo ITURRIZAGA, Ernesto INARKIEV,  
Pavel ELJANOV, Arkadij NAIDITSCH,  
Baskaran ADHIBAN, Ahmed ADLY,  
Rinat JUMABAYEV,  
Sandro MARECO **6½**, etc.

# SOLUTION

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## 1

Black prefers (A) – with the pawn on c6 instead of c5 (B). White's threat is 1. ♖xf6 gxf6 2. ♜xf6+ ♔f8 3. ♜xe7+ and 4. ♜xg4 winning the bishop on g4. Black has prepared an in-between defensive move 1... ♜xf3. This would not help if the pawn is on c5 (B) due to 2. ♜d6+! and 3. ♜xe7+. However, if the pawn is on c6 (A), the bishop on b4 guards the queen, so 2. ♜d6+ is not playable.

Instead, White would choose between 2. ♜xf3 gxf6 3. ♜xf6+ ♔f8 4. ♜f4 h5 5. ♜xd4± and 2. ♜xe7 ♜xe2 3. ♜xb4 ♜xf1 4. ♜xf1 b6=. In either case, Black has avoided a major disaster.

## 2

Black prefers (B) – with the pawn on c6 instead of b7 (A). Black has a tactical idea 33... ♜xd3? 34. ♜xd3 exd3 (34... ♜c5+ 35. ♜e3 wins) 35. ♜xe5 d2. However, after 36. ♜e8+ ♔h7 37. ♜d8 White can stop the d-pawn. Now, with the pawn on c6 (B), Black can play 37... ♜d5! with a deadly interference. With the pawn on b7 (A), Black has no way to advance the d-pawn and should refrain from executing the combination altogether: 33... ♜d6±.

## 3

Black prefers (A) – with the rook on a2 instead of (B) – with the rook on a3. Black has a brilliant combination: 1... ♜xg3+ 2. fxc3 (2. hxc3 ♜g2#) 2... ♜h1+!! 3. ♜xh1 ♜xf1+ 4. ♜g1 ♜f3+ winning back the queen. With the rook on a2 (A), the best White can do is 5. ♜g2 hxc3+ 6. ♜xg2 ♜a1. White is paralyzed and Black has many ways to win. For example, Black can wait until White runs out of pawn moves on the queenside and has to push the h-pawn.

If the rook is on a3 (B), it controls f3 and Black is no longer able to play 4... ♜f3+. Thus Black shouldn't go in for the combination, but instead play the preparatory 1... ♜d7!. Now Black has an additional threat of ... ♜xe3. Even with best play by White, Black should gain a significant advantage, but not a quick win, as in (A). One sample line is 2. ♜xd1 ♜xf2! 3. ♜xf2 ♜xf2 4. ♜xf2 ♜g2+ 5. ♜e1 ♜xh2 6. ♜f2 ♜h1+ 7. ♜d2 ♜xe1+ 8. ♜xe1 h2 winning. If you said "A & B are no different" because you saw this entire line and assessed the resulting position as a win for Black, assign yourself 8 points.

## SHAMKIR, AZERBAIJAN

April 19-28, 2018  
5<sup>th</sup> Vugar Gashimov Memorial

1. Magnus CARLSEN **6**  
2. Ding LIREN **5½**  
3. Sergey KARJAKIN **5**  
4-7. Teimur RADJABOV,  
Shakhriyar MAMEDYAROV,  
Radoslaw WOJTASZEK, Anish GIRI **4½**  
8-9. Rauf MAMEDOV, Veselin TOPALOV **4**  
10. David NAVARA **2½**

## HAVANA, CUBA

May 8-20, 2018  
53<sup>rd</sup> Capablanca Memorial  
(Double round-robin)

1. Samuel SHANKLAND **7½**  
2. Aleksey DREEV **6**  
3. David ANTON GUIJARRO **5½**  
4. Aleksandr RAKHMANOV **4**  
5-6. Lazaro BRUZON,  
Yusnel BACALLAO **3½**

## SHANGHAI/CHONGQING, CHINA

May 2-20, 2018, Women's World Chess Championship Match

| Name        | RTG  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Total |
|-------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-------|
| Ju WENJUN   | 2571 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½  | 5½    |
| Tan ZHONGYI | 2522 | ½ | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½  | 4½    |





# WHERE GRANDMASTERS ADVISE YOUNG PLAYERS

# 5x5 Q&A

**01** What is the advantage of someone starting to play chess at an early age? When is it best to start? And for those who might be late in learning the game, are they able to get back on track to becoming a titled player?

I would recommend introducing a child to chess as early as possible, preferably between the ages of four to nine. It's well known that they will then assimilate any given knowledge more effectively and profoundly – whether that is about chess, music, mathematics, or even public speaking.

I believe learning chess is quite similar to learning a language. You cannot acquire a perfect accent in a foreign language unless it has been learnt from a young age; nevertheless you can still speak it fluently and without any problems of comprehension. Translated to chess, this represents the tiny difference between a top class player and a regular grandmaster.

**02** If there are three main departments of the game – opening, middlegame and endgame – what portion of our time should we spend on each? And what is the most important?

Quite simply, your choice of opening is directly correlated to the type of middlegame you're going to reach, and it's important that you find it to your taste.

Once you know what type of position you want to achieve, only learn the precise opening moves that will sail your ship into the desired safe harbor. Learning openings other than achieving such a goal has no purpose.

You have almost no influence on what the endgame is going to be like.

**03** From your own experience can you recall any specific type of opening position or endgame theme that an aspiring chess player should be sure to study because of its particular importance?

One's choice of openings is a reflection of one's character – if you are a rather

examine pawn endgames.

From my experience three things were crucial for success – (1) good tactical skills; (2) the intent to always play for the initiative; and (3) to maintain perfect harmony in one's chess pieces.

**04** Why would you recommend chess to youngsters? What joys may they expect to experience on this thrilling journey, in addition to those you have mentioned in your previous answer?

Chess is in a league of its own. It is a fine means of communication – there are millions of people who will understand you and respond in a similar fashion. You could be a part of an amazingly exciting world!

**05** Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business?

Chess teaches you to be persistent. I played a Challenger match for the world title in 1990 and then a world championship semi-final 11 years later. It also teaches you to think big. Although I failed to achieve my ultimate goal in chess, later I was determined to excel in other areas too and went on to become a university professor and then a minister in the government. Chess teaches us to focus on our to-do plans, like those little things I am tackling every day with my toddler kids. If you seriously want to progress and succeed, nothing can stop you. You can then call yourself a real chess player!

Highest  
Performing  
US-Born  
Female  
Player  
of all Time

**GM  
ALISA  
MARIC**



So it makes sense to focus only on studying basic endgame positions and to be ready to calculate well. That will do the job, the rest will come with experience.

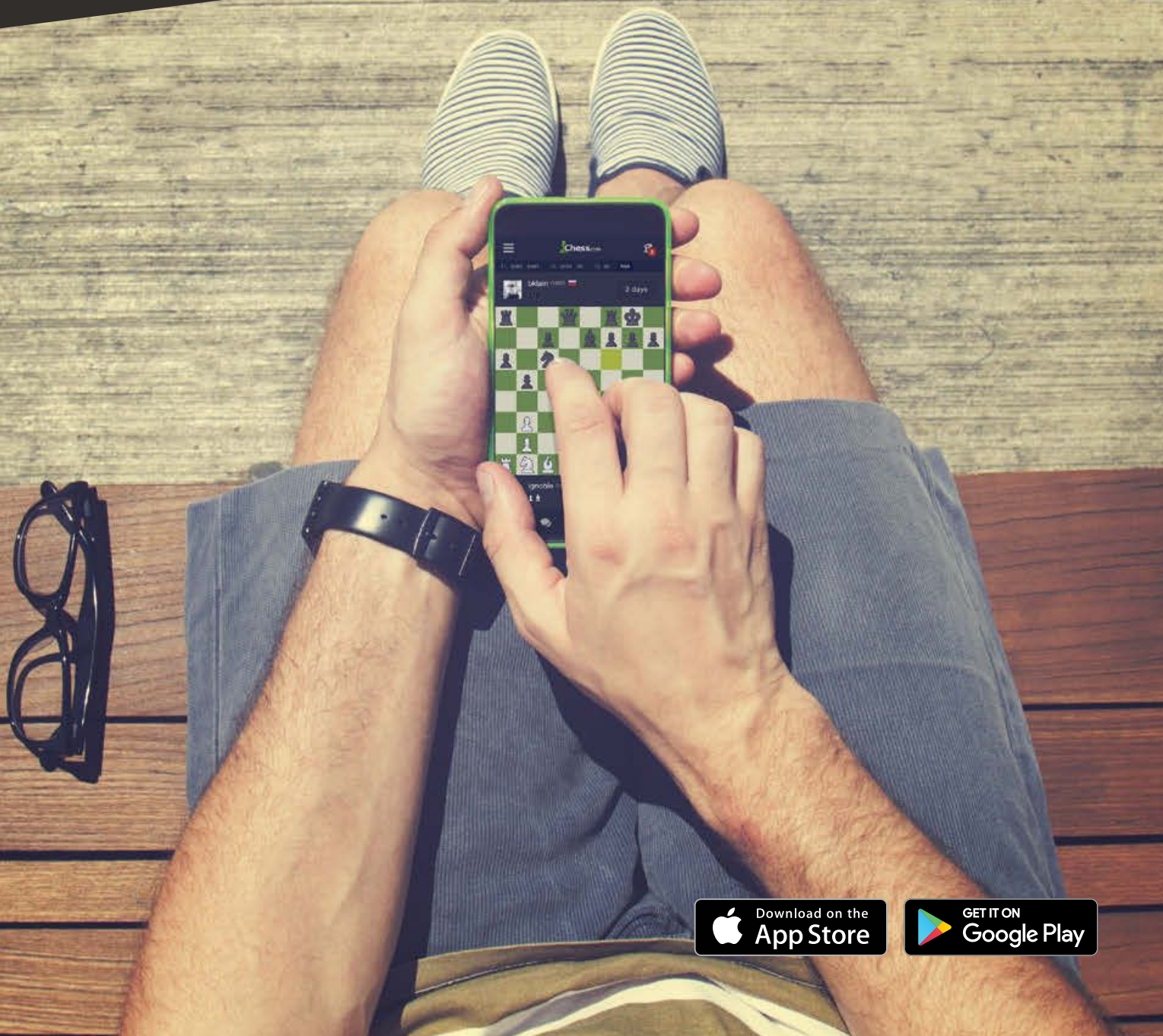
So your main focus should be on the middlegame for about 80% of your time, which leaves 10% for each of the other two departments of the game. From your coach you should primarily expect explanations of strategic and tactical ideas, or else you can learn these by yourself from the games of strong players.

introspective person, open positions might not suit you, and vice versa. When I was younger I was taught the ultra-sharp Velimirovic Attack against the Sicilian – by GM Velimirovic himself! However, it was not my cup of tea and I found myself more at home with the positional niceties of the Queen's Gambit or the Fianchetto Variation against the King's Indian Defense.

Nevertheless beginners should start their chess journey with a study of open games where pieces are developed quickly. For the final phase of the game, first

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For all endgame positions with 3, 4 and 5 pieces, as well as for 143 of the most important 6-piece positions the new Turbo 5 has the precise evaluation of the position for you to access immediately. So with the programs ChessBase 13/14, Fritz 15/16, Komodo 11 and Houdini 6 you can establish in no time at all whether an endgame position is won, lost or drawn and what the path to the draw or win

looks like. Over and above that, the programs Komodo Chess 11 and Houdini 6 also use the knowledge of the Endgame Turbo during their analysis of endgames with more than six pieces, e.g. whenever during their calculation of variations it is possible to evaluate liquidations into endgames with six or fewer pieces. Thus these engines more quickly reach more precise and reliable results and clearly improve your playing strength.

Using Endgame Turbo 5 is childishly easy: plugging the USB stick into the computer automatically starts an initialisation which only takes one or two seconds. Done and dusted! From then on your Fritz or ChessBase program is, in combination with the Endgame Turbo 5 USB stick, a real endgame genius! There is no need to install the endgame databases on the hard disk.

Endgame expert  
Dr. Karsten Müller:

*"Previously the analyses of complicated endgames were often mysterious. The rise of the computer shone light into many dark corners. But not till Tablebases could all the beauty and incredible depth of the royal game be shown to full advantage. The new Endgame Turbo 5 is indispensable for the decryption of complex endgames and also for my own analyses!"*



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